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Tuesday, 12 February 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Lewis-Navarro	(Panama)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Michel
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Kouchner
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Craxi
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Wolff
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Opening remarks

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before proceeding with the approval of the agenda, I would like to express the honour that I feel to preside over this meeting on the sixth anniversary of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, dealing with the participation of children in armed conflicts.

I wish to highlight the presence of distinguished guests, particularly the Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium, Mr. Charles Michel, and the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Mr. Vittorio Craxi. In addition, I offer special acknowledgement to Permanent Representative of France, Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert, for the excellent work that he has done chairing the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, El Salvador, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Guinea, Iceland, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda.

In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

It is so decided.

Also, in accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

It is so decided.

Also, in accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Jo Becker, Representative of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.

It is so decided.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 7 February 2008 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2008/88, and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council to be held on Tuesday, 12 February 2008, regarding children and armed conflict".

I propose, with the consent of the Council to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mansour (Palestine) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2007/757, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

I shall now give the floor to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Ms. Coomaraswamy: Mr. President, I thank you for convening this open debate of the Security Council at the ministerial level, a meeting devoted to taking action to ensure the protection of children exposed to armed conflict. The level of the debate and your presence here today, Mr. President, testifies to your strong commitment on this critical issue.

I am grateful to the Security Council, its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and particularly the leadership that France has been providing in the Working Group on the agenda for the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

It is with hope tempered by caution that I present to the Council this report of great significance. The seventh annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict reviews developments in 18 situations of concern, recording systematically the following six grave violations: killing or maiming of children, recruiting or using child soldiers, attacks against schools and hospitals, rape and other grave sexual violence against children, the abduction of children, and the denial of humanitarian access to children. Altogether, 58 offending parties have been specifically named and listed; they are drawn from 13 situations of concern. All 58 offending parties are responsible for the recruitment and use of child soldiers. In addition, many of them are also responsible for committing other grave abuses, as recorded in the lists.

I am pleased to state that this report has been a United Nations system-wide collaborative effort. I would also like to stress that the hallmark of the monitoring and reporting exercise, as well as of this annual reporting to the Security Council, has been a constructive dialogue at all levels with the Member States concerned for the benefit of the war-affected children.

Over the past year, much has been accomplished on this ambitious agenda for children. The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has met on six occasions, and there have been positive developments as a result of its recommendations and actions. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, after an initial delay, the Government brought to trial former Mai-Mai Commander Kyungu Mutanga, also known as Gédéon, for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the recruitment of 300 children in Katanga Province from 2003 to 2006. That action followed strong recommendations by the Working Group to take appropriate legal measures against members of armed groups accused of grave crimes against children. This marks a turning point which shows us that through our collective efforts we can transform protective standards into compliance and mere condemnation into accountability.

Important precedents have also been set to end impunity for crimes against children. We look forward to the trial proceedings by the International Criminal Court for militia leader Thomas Lubanga, who is facing charges of having recruited child soldiers in the north-eastern Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; similar indictments are in place for two other Ituri militia leaders. The trial of former head of State Charles Taylor of Liberia by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and the sentencing by the Special Court of three members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and the Civil Defence Forces militia for the recruitment and use of child soldiers — all of that sends an important message that such crimes against children will not be tolerated and that those who engage in such practices will be brought to justice.

We are also increasingly witnessing the implementation of key commitments by parties through action plans, and that in turn is beginning to yield concrete results in terms of protection for children on the ground. A noteworthy achievement has been realized with the parties to the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, where, for the first time, we have had a de-listing of parties from the annexes. The Forces nouvelles and four armed militias have successfully implemented their action plans and have ceased all recruitment of children, and that continues to be verified by the United Nations country team — hence their de-listing.

The dialogue in Côte d'Ivoire has resulted in the release of approximately 3,000 children to UNICEF and child protection agencies. That success should reinforce the resolve of the Council, as its engagement is making a real difference in the lives of these children. Progress on action plans to end the recruitment of children by armed forces and groups has also been made in the Central African Republic, Myanmar, the Sudan, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Chad. I am also pleased to note that the Government of Colombia has agreed to implement the monitoring and reporting mechanism pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), and I look forward to working closely with that Government.

In spite of the impressive progress, I regret to report that the overall situation of children affected by conflict remains grave and entirely unacceptable. There are still many challenges, and my Office, along with fellow partners — especially UNICEF, peacekeeping operations and political missions — continues the important work begun by the Council, by enhancing our collective efforts for the protection of children affected by conflict. Indeed, although I am addressing the Council, the protection of children is an issue that necessitates concerted efforts by all Member States. I am happy to see the presence of the representatives of many Member States in this Chamber today, and I thank them for their commitment on this issue.

It is also imperative to note that, in certain situations of concern, the inability of the United Nations monitoring and reporting regime to engage in dialogue with non-State actors has impeded progress on securing the release and rehabilitation of children associated with such groups. I urge the Council to call on relevant Member States to facilitate dialogue with non-State armed groups for the purpose of developing action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children and to address all other grave violations and abuses committed against children.

I would also like to draw the attention of the Council to several urgent challenges that will require our close examination as a basis for continued global efforts for war-affected children. In order to achieve the protection of children affected by conflict, we need to expand our recognition of the changing characteristics of conflict. Today there are grey zones of conflict that blur traditional lines between armed conflict and criminal violence, often involving transnational crime, non-traditional warfare and trafficking. Terrorism and counter-terrorism measures pose their own special problems for the protection of children today, as we have witnessed recently in Baghdad. The use of suicide bombing is entirely unacceptable; nothing can justify it. We have witnessed child victims at both ends of such acts: children have been used as suicide bombers in certain instances, while many children have been killed by suicide bombings. Counter-terrorism strategies also cause concern as we move away from police methods to large-scale military action, with collateral damage that sometimes includes the killing and maiming of children.

Systematic and deliberate attacks on schoolchildren, teachers and school buildings have escalated in certain situations. In Afghanistan, such attacks are targeted against girls' schools in an effort to intimidate and to prevent girls from gaining access to education. This seems to follow a particular pattern and to contain an ideological dimension that is disturbing. We urge that measures be taken to secure schools as zones of peace, through commitments by parties to ensure the child's right to education.

In regional conflicts, such as those in the Great Lakes and Horn regions of Africa, the cross-border recruitment of children from camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees is surging. Research shows us that security in camps is one of the major factors in the recruitment of children: the greater the security, the less the recruitment. This has important implications for humanitarian agencies running refugee and IDP camps as well as for our peacekeeping operations. The cross-border movement of child soldiers and their recruiters is also posing a great many problems for agencies working with these extremely vulnerable populations.

The detention of children for alleged association with armed groups, in violation of international standards, is increasingly worrisome. Many detained children are subjected to ill treatment, torture and forceful interrogation methods and are deprived of food and education. These children also lack recourse to prompt and appropriate legal assistance and usually are not separated from adults.

The use of indiscriminate weapons, such as cluster munitions, during attacks in areas of civilian concentration has a severe impact on those populations, especially children, even long after the conflict may have ended. I am heartened to learn that a major international conference on a binding international instrument prohibiting cluster munitions will take place this spring in Dublin.

Sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, against children is a devastating consequence of conflict in many parts of the world. Sexual violence against children by State and non-State parties to conflict is prohibited by international law. We have received information that in the Great Lakes region, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, there are appalling levels of sexual and gender-based violence. Impunity for such acts is widespread. It is imperative that the perpetrators of acts of rape and other kinds of sexual violence, which have a long-term, devastating impact on the victims, be prosecuted in accordance with the gravity of such crimes. Like the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence is always deliberate, targeted and a direct consequence of criminal intent. We cannot tolerate such action in any context, but when it involves children it is especially abhorrent.

The recruitment and use of child soldiers has been the main concern of the Council and the gateway to the lists annexed to the annual reports of the Secretary-General to date. We feel this was a great step forward for the Council; the parties that continue to engage in this serious crime must be put on notice that targeted measures will be undertaken against persistent violators. However, there are five other grave violations, and child victims of those grave violations and abuses deserve the attention and protection of the international community. It is our belief that the gateway to the annexed list of parties should include all the grave violations.

Nonetheless, for the reasons I have mentioned, the Council may wish to take an incremental approach and initially consider systematic sexual violence against children as an additional gateway to the annexes. In this respect, the inclusion of grave sexual violence would represent an important step in the monitoring process, particularly in terms of holding violators accountable for this egregious crime against children.

It is now time that the Security Council move from words towards effective action. There are 16 persistent violators who have been on the annexed lists for five years in a row. Although certain parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Sri Lanka and Myanmar are making efforts, several others remain in contempt of the Council and its resolutions. The Council has already, on previous occasions, expressed its intention to take concrete and targeted measures against those parties. It is most important that the Council make good on its promise in order to ensure the credibility of this exercise.

The targeted measures could include the imposition of travel restrictions on leaders and their exclusion from any governance structures and amnesty provisions, the imposition of arms embargoes, a ban on military assistance and restrictions on the flow of financial resources to the parties concerned. I urge the Council to begin to set up a mechanism to review and oversee the imposition of targeted measures against these violators to end the trend towards impunity in all situations.

The Security Council is playing a historic role when it deals with this theme and this mandate. In recognizing that the protection of children in armed conflict is an important peace and security issue which requires effective and decisive action, the Council has moved the agenda forward, understanding that there can never be peace in the world unless we take care of our children. One of the hallmarks of this agenda has been that, at the most critical moments, the imperative to protect children has overridden political considerations. The Council and its Working Group are encouraged to continue to give high priority to children above all else.

No one who has looked into the eyes of a child soldier can be at peace unless we rid this world of this scourge. No one who has held the hand of a young girl who has suffered multiple rapes can ever forget the duty to work for the protection of the vulnerable.

I would like to thank the Council and my fellow partners for taking this historic journey together, towards peace and justice for children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Ms. Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

Ms. Veneman: I am very pleased to join the Council today as it turns its attention once again to the situation of children affected by armed conflict. UNICEF welcomes the Security Council's ongoing concern with grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.

I commend my colleague, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her work in helping to draw global attention to the impact on children in situations of armed conflict.

It is fitting that we gather today on the sixth anniversary of the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. States which have not done so should be urged to sign, ratify and fully implement the Optional Protocol.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757) helps highlight the harsh reality of what children undergo in countries affected by armed conflict. Children continue to suffer from the horrors of war. Children often cope with trauma, violence and the loss of family, homes and community, and many have been killed or maimed even long after conflict has come to an end. As highlighted in the Secretary-General's report, children are all too often victims of indiscriminate weapons, such as cluster munitions. Children must be protected from the effects of these and other indiscriminate weapons.

Children also suffer from the indirect impact of war through resurgence in preventable diseases such as malaria, measles, diarrhoea and respiratory infections. Recent data show that conflict and post-conflict countries have some of the highest rates of under-5 mortality. Conflict and strife often break down public health services and contribute to food insecurity, population displacement and continued insecurity. Rehabilitation of key services and infrastructure requires security and political stability.

An essential part of re-establishing normalcy for children affected by conflict is to ensure that they have access to schools. When entire communities are in a state of upheaval, schools can provide a safe haven and a sense of normalcy. It is therefore vital that their sanctity be protected. In Afghanistan, as noted in the report, schools have been deliberately targeted in the ongoing hostilities. The misuse or occupation of schools, or attacks against them, are some of the worst violations against children in situations of armed conflict. They are also a violation of one of the most basic principles of the laws of war: that civilian sites must be protected.

UNICEF has a long history of advocating, and assisting in, the release and reintegration of children used by armed forces and groups. We know from experience that it is possible to reintegrate these children, especially when they are provided with assistance and the skills they need to become positive and productive members of society. Yet reintegration is a difficult and long-term process requiring patience and long-term commitment.

Throughout the past several years, UNICEF country offices have worked with States and non-State actors that have recruited and used children, in order to bring an end to this abhorrent practice. The report of the Secretary-General references UNICEF's engagement in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire and the Sudan.

The 2007 Paris commitments help to reinforce international consensus on the unlawful recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. These commitments also reiterate measures that States can take to protect children involved in hostilities and help reintegrate them into their families and communities. States should be urged to endorse the Paris commitments.

As mentioned by my colleague Ms. Coomaraswamy, girls and women in conflict situations are extremely vulnerable because of sexual violence perpetrated by armed forces and groups and, at times, even by the very people entrusted with providing their protection. Sexual violence is so often used as a weapon of war; there must be greater focus and attention on this issue. Allow me to share one story, as told by a 14-year-old girl in Liberia. She said:

> "The attackers tied me up and raped me because I was fighting. About five of them did the same thing to me until one of their commanders who knew my father came and stopped them, but also took me to make me his wife. I accepted him because of fear".

We need to put an end to the abuse, the rapes and the sexual violence.

UNICEF welcomes the efforts of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed

Conflict. In a relatively short period of time, the monitoring and reporting mechanism has produced positive results for children on the ground by focusing on grave violations in six categories, as stated earlier by my colleague.

More must be done to better monitor, prevent and respond to these violations. It is critical that the best interests of the child be the guiding principle of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, rising above all other considerations.

The purpose of the mechanism is to monitor, report and respond to the situation of child victims of conflict in order to reduce the occurrence of grave violations against children, enhance the accountability of perpetrators and prevent further grave violations in situations of armed conflict.

Children continue to bear the brunt of conflict, but they also demonstrate resilience and capacity to overcome the violence around them. Their energy and strong desire to end conflict can be a catalyst for peacebuilding within their own communities. We have heard some of those young voices in a compilation of stories and recommendations from conflict zones, titled "Will you listen?". The compilation was launched last year on 17 October as a supplement to the 10-year Graça Machel strategic review, which was submitted to the General Assembly. Many of those children and youth spoke of the important role they play in providing change and of the need to act swiftly. As a young woman from Colombia said, "We are the future and people should be aware of that. Right now, we are inheriting a very unstable world".

Let us keep those words in mind as we move forward with a shared sense of urgency in helping to build a better and safer world for our children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Ms. Jo Becker, representative of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict.

Ms. Becker: I would like to thank the presidency and the members of the Security Council for giving non-governmental organizations (NGOs) the opportunity to participate in this important forum. It is an honour to be here.

I am speaking today on behalf of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, an international network of NGOs including grassroots civil society groups as well as some of the largest humanitarian and human rights organizations in the world. Many of our colleagues are witnessing war every day and struggling to protect children from the constant threat of violence.

Today's open debate provides an important opportunity to reflect on the progress achieved by the Security Council in strengthening protections for children. We welcome the Council's achievements — the monitoring and reporting mechanism, the development of action plans to end the use of child soldiers, and the very important efforts of the innovative Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

However, we are not here to celebrate. As members know, in many ways children in armed conflicts today are no better off than their peers were years ago. Impunity for those who brutally attack them is too often the norm. Today, it is as important as ever that all of members of the Council stay focused on the purpose of their work and redouble their efforts to make real change for children.

We urge the Security Council to take several critical steps without delay. Those steps reflect the 12 recommendations set out by the Secretary-General in his latest report on children and armed conflict. First, the monitoring and reporting mechanism must be strengthened and its scope expanded. Secondly, strong and consistent action must be taken against perpetrators that repeatedly violate the rights of children. Thirdly, accountability must be demanded from perpetrators by imposing targeted measures when warranted. Finally, the full range of actions in the Working Group's toolkit in response to continuing violations must be utilized.

It has now been over two years since resolution 1612 (2005) set the groundbreaking monitoring and reporting mechanism into motion. While the mechanism is still in its infancy, a recent Watchlist field-based study found that the mechanism has made impressive strides in the quest to collect timely, accurate and objective information. Our study also identified obstacles and challenges, including the need for greater collaboration with other existing networks, stronger support for the participation of civil society groups, better efforts to protect the safety of survivors and others who provide information, and more effective responses to violations. To address those, we have provided practical recommendations to the United Nations and its partners, which should be swiftly implemented.

Fundamentally, the Security Council must also address the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. Currently, the mechanism is triggered only by violations involving the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and is automatically applied only to the situations on the Council's formal agenda. It should be automatically applied to all situations of armed conflict in which children's security and rights are violated by armed forces and groups.

As recommended by the Secretary-General, we also urge the Council to give equal consideration to all six grave violations against children so that any of those violations could trigger the application of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the listing of a party in the Secretary-General's annexes. At the same time, we recognize that an incremental and pragmatic approach has contributed to the success of the children and armed conflict agenda. For that reason, as a next step, we encourage the Council to add rape and other forms of gender-based violence as an additional trigger for the mechanism.

Some parties to armed conflict have recruited and used boys and girls as child soldiers year after year, in defiance of both international law and the Council's own resolutions. Between 2002 and 2008, at least 14 parties to armed conflict have been named in all five of the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict. Those persistent violators include the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional in Colombia, the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, and the Government forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Myanmar.

Those persistent violators should be subject to the Council's strongest action. In resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), the Security Council said that it would consider the imposition of targeted measures, such as arms embargoes, against parties that do not end their use of child soldiers. Yet the Security Council has taken targeted measures against just one individual, imposing a travel ban and asset freeze on a former commander in Côte d'Ivoire.

The Security Council cannot expect to achieve accountability based on empty threats. To ensure their own credibility, Security Council members must be prepared to exercise their powers to impose targeted measures when warranted. That entails systematically referring information to relevant sanctions committees and, in other cases, applying measures through country-specific or thematic resolutions of the full Security Council.

Finally, I would like to address the Security Council Working Group's use of its toolkit in responding to grave violations against children. The toolkit provides a valuable array of actions to encourage parties to armed conflict to comply with their international obligations. While the Working Group has used some of the actions in the toolkit regularly, others have been used seldom or even not at all. Those tools are already available to Council members, and they should immediately put them to use. Full and robust use of those tools will result in improved protection for children and accountability from perpetrators. There is no time to waste.

As NGOs working on behalf of children in appalling circumstances, we support the Security Council's important efforts. We will continue to participate in the monitoring and reporting mechanism and to build and strengthen programmes for children on the ground. We will continue to pressure perpetrators to end their violations and to offer support to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. For us, those are urgent priorities.

We commend the Security Council on the progress it has made to end violations against children, but we appeal to it not to stop short of making that progress consistent and tangible for children caught up in extremely dangerous situations. We urge Council members to commit to negotiating a new resolution within the next year to close existing gaps, maintain the progress achieved to date, and ensure that all parties to armed conflict are held to account for their violations against children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): How many of us around this horseshoe-shaped table have children? Who in this Chamber does not want the best for his son or daughter? Three hundred thousand children have been forcibly separated from their families. That represents half of Belgium's children between the ages of 11 and 15. Let us think of the stark dilemma facing those children: kill or be killed. They are kidnapped, drugged and abused, and forced to commit the worst of atrocities, sometimes against their own families. As fathers and mothers, we cannot resign ourselves to that situation.

During my recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo I had an opportunity to see for myself the distress of children caught up in armed conflict. Beyond all the available reports and statistics, looking into the eyes of a girl who had been abused, raped and even mutilated made it possible for me to realize the horror that sexual violence means, especially for children. I am convinced that children who have known only war and who owe their survival to their Kalashnikovs are not a lost cause when it comes to peace and development. To the contrary, they are an essential part of it.

The problem of children and armed conflict is well known. It has been clearly described and analysed in the report (S/2007/757) of the Secretary-General. It is not just a question of human rights and development assistance. It is also a matter of peace and security. I would even go as far as saying that it is also a question of humanity. The recommendations made by Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, must be implemented quickly. Too much time has already passed. The fates of too many children have already been sealed.

Beyond the international awareness that has resulted from the publication of the list of armed State and non-State groups guilty of recruiting or using children, that public list is above all an important deterrent that can brook no compromise. With the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005) and the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, the Security Council now has essential information at its disposal to enable it to act and apply pressure on those armed groups. The protection of children in every phase of an armed conflict is never negotiable. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to adopt the necessary sanctions against individuals and groups that continue to recruit children. Combating impunity through national and international justice mechanisms is a crucial prelude to reconciliation and peace. The recent transfer of Mathieu Ngudjolo from Kinshasa to The Hague is a further step in that direction. Belgium fully supports that approach.

Sexual violence is another scourge receiving increasing attention from the Security Council, and from the United Nations system overall. As the Council is aware, with regard to monitoring the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), sexual violence is taken into account only when it is associated with the presence of child soldiers. We cannot limit ourselves to such situations alone. Sexual violence in conflict situations has tragic and long-term consequences for those affected by it. This is one of the most heinous and appalling practices of wartime. The Belgian Government advocates strengthening the mechanism established by virtue of resolution 1612 (2005) by including in the annexes to the reports of the Secretary-General a list of parties to conflict responsible for systematic sexual violence.

Combating the phenomenon of child soldiers is an imperative that must compel all of us, without exception, to act. The Security Council must become more involved in this issue. It must also encourage other United Nations bodies to vastly intensify the political pressure that is necessary to put an end to these abuses — "hyper-pressure" is needed. Member States and international agencies and organizations must translate their commitments into concrete action. For my part, on behalf of the Belgian Government — as Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt did last September (see S/PV.5749) — I can assure the Council that Belgium will act tirelessly to that end. In the same vein, Belgium will continue to advocate for a binding instrument to ban cluster bombs, which, as we all well know, affect children in particular.

I want to believe that today's debate will lead to an increased commitment on the part of the Council. During the 2002 special session of the General Assembly devoted to children, Secretary-General Kofi Annan addressed the children of the world in these words: "Yet we, the grown-ups, have failed you deplorably in upholding many of [your rights]" and "We, the grown-ups, must reverse this list of failures" (*A/S-27/PV.1, p. 4*).

That was in 2002. Today, in 2008, however, armed conflicts in the Kivus, Colombia and other affected regions are still making victims of children. Those children too have the right to live in safety. Let us give them hope. It is our duty to guarantee their basic rights.

Mr. Craxi (Italy) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the Security Council, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs Samuel Lewis-Navarro of Panama, for having organized this debate, which provides us a valuable opportunity to discuss the issue of children and armed conflict. We believe that the Security Council has a particular responsibility in combating this reprehensible phenomenon.

Allow me to express Italy's support for the work of the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Human Rights Council and all non-governmental organizations working to protect children around the world.

The statistics before us are appalling. They require immediate action by the international community. In the past 10 years, armed conflicts have been responsible for the deaths of more than 2 million children and the maiming of another 6 million. Likewise, millions of children are today refugees. Others have been taken hostage or trafficked illegally. The international community cannot remain idle.

Italy has always been deeply involved in promoting the rights of all children. Under Italy's presidency in 2003, the European Union (EU) adopted its Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. Thanks to that instrument, the European Union is taking concrete steps in multilateral forums and as regards its relations with third countries to protect children caught up in armed conflict. Similarly, we have made this issue one of the priorities vis-à-vis our candidacy for the Human Rights Council.

We believe that there is a very close link between development and protecting the rights of children. We need to act in societies afflicted by conflict in order to provide children with prospects for a different future. We need to take up specific projects in health, education and labour and to offer children real, clearly defined options to help them reintegrate into civilian society. In that respect, Italy is using its development cooperation efforts to confirm its commitment to protecting children as we develop new assistance strategies in this area.

We support the United Nations in all its programmes for children. Italy has funded UNICEF projects in the specific and special case of Afghanistan, where there are some initiatives focused on education and school agencies. Italian assistance to Iraq includes a contribution to UNICEF to improve the condition of children who have suffered the consequences of conflict. We are determined to pursue that specific effort.

We support and actively participate in the Council's Working Group, hoping that its role will become greater and that its recommendations will be implemented quickly.

Today, I would like to welcome the submission of the report of the Secretary-General for 2007 and express our support for its content and, in particular, for its recommendations. We share the idea that in order to combat this heinous phenomenon, we need a comprehensive strategy that is not limited to combating the recruitment of children. I therefore wish to join my European colleagues in encouraging the Security Council to include rape and other acts of serious sexual and gender-based violence against children among those violations that would cause a party to a conflict to be included in the annex of the report of the Secretary-General. Italy therefore supports the recommendation by the Secretary-General to submit to the International Criminal Court cases of violations of children's rights in armed conflicts that are under its jurisdiction.

Finally, allow me to recall that Italy endorses the position of the European Union, which is actively engaged in efforts for the international community to adopt a legal instrument to ban submunition weapons, which cause unacceptable suffering to civilian populations, in particular to children.

I must conclude by saying that we have the duty to ensure that this debate will signify an important and, as someone said, historic moment in combating the phenomenon of children in armed conflict. For that reason, I would hope that this debate would represent a crucial and decisive stage on the path towards a new Security Council resolution, to be adopted during the next debate on this subject, which would take into account lessons learned, situations that can no longer wait and progress made since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005).

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya): We thank you, Mr. Minister, for presiding over this important meeting of the Security Council. We wish, at the outset, to extend our sincere thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for the valuable briefing in which she presented the annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757). We would also like to thank the Executive Director of UNICEF and the representative of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict for their two valuable briefings.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is greatly concerned about the abuses children are exposed to — including abductions, killings, maimings, sexual abuse and recruitment in armed conflict — as listed in the consecutive reports of the Secretary-General, which highlight the increase and frequency of such shameful acts. My country strongly condemns all such practices.

In this context, we support the recommendation of the Secretary-General that calls upon the States concerned to take strict measures within their national legislation and in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law to hold the perpetrators of such crimes accountable and to impose upon them the maximum deterrent penalty without any opportunity for impunity.

We also support the opinion of the Secretary-General that the detention of children in various conflict zones, based on claims that they are associated with different armed groups, is a direct violation of international legal standards. In particular, we would mention the cruel treatment suffered by Palestinian children detained in Israeli prisons. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya calls upon the international community to take the necessary deterrent measures in this regard. We strongly condemn Israeli military operations that have led over the past few years to the killing of more than 800 Palestinian children and the displacement of thousands of other children because of the destruction of their family homes. In addition, thousands of Palestinian children are subjected to suffering on a daily basis while trying to reach their schools because of the racist separation wall constructed in the Palestinian occupied territory and the hundreds of checkpoints in the West Bank. We regret that the briefings this morning did not deal with that unique case of suffering, because of its long-standing nature. It is a deliberate policy that has been adopted by the occupiers and must be criminalized, just as other harmful practices that impact children have been criminalized.

We also agree with the Secretary-General concerning the importance of the development and revitalization of long-term programmes and plans of action. Moreover, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes should emerge from local communities, so that the reintegration of children in those societies can be permanent and successful. We call upon the international community and its donors and financial institutions to provide a helping hand and assistance for implementing such programmes.

The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts endeavours to protect children and save them from areas of conflict and deserves our praise and appreciation. We would like the Working Group to avoid selectivity and double standards in formulating its recommendations and in carrying out its work. Its recommendations should not be politicized. The Security Council should stay away from taking punitive measures of imposing punishment against countries whose nationals commit criminal acts against children. Instead, it should place the responsibility for imposing punishment squarely within the competence of national legislation subject to the provisions of international humanitarian law.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): It is a pleasure to have you here with us, Mr. Minister, presiding over this meeting. We thank you for convening it; this is a very important subject, as we have already heard.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General and the Office of Under-Secretary-General Coomaraswamy for their diligence in implementing their mandates under resolution 1612 (2005). I would also like to thank Ambassador Ripert and his team for tirelessly and diligently guiding the Council's Working Group on this subject.

Our subject today was first comprehensively presented to the international community in 1996, in Ms. Graça Machel's report on children affected by armed conflict (A/51/306). The strong and committed response to her report resulted in the creation of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and in the evolution of an important series of Security Council resolutions that established a process to assist the

United Nations and its Member States in addressing this very serious matter.

The process has at its core the development of action plans by States and non-State actors, identified by the Secretary-General in his annual reports, to halt the recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of the international obligations applicable to them. These action plans have proved to be a positive way to guide and measure progress, and we believe it would be useful for all parties listed in annex II of the Secretary-General's report (S/2007/757) to be similarly required to submit such action plans.

The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to address the tragedy of children and armed conflict. So far, the Working Group has engaged on situations as diverse as Burma, Burundi, Sri Lanka and Sudan. Its efforts are being tried and tested to bring positive changes in the lives of children affected by armed conflict. As its work evolves, the Working Group may need to use additional tools, including targeted and graduated measures, against persistent violators to persuade them to comply with applicable international law.

We are pleased that the Working Group has been able to see progress in Côte d'Ivoire, where parties previously associated with the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers have ended those practices and have been removed from the list of violators contained in the Secretary-General's report.

However, our work has just begun. The recent press statement issued by Under-Secretary-General Coomaraswamy informs us of an alarming statistic: over a quarter of a million child soldiers remain engaged in conflicts around the globe. One such child is too many.

We remain deeply concerned by the situation of children and armed conflict in Burma, one of the worst in the world. The Burmese army continues to recruit child soldiers, some as young as 10 years old, and to arrest children for desertion. Some children are sent into combat only days after deployment to units, or are forced to participate in human rights abuses, such as the burning of villages and using civilians for forced labour. The Burmese regime prevents a comprehensive assessment of the magnitude of this problem by denying the necessary access for international experts. My delegation urges immediate and unimpeded access to communities in Burma for the United Nations country team as well as for international humanitarian organizations in order to permit progress in ending this tragedy.

My delegation is encouraged by the reported slight improvement in the overall situation concerning children in armed conflict in Southern Sudan. We urge full cooperation from the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan to follow through on the commitments made and to put an end to all violations against and recruitment of children, including their recruitment and use in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law.

However, we remain deeply concerned about ongoing recruitment and use of child soldiers by Government forces and various armed groups throughout Sudan, particularly in the Darfur region and in the camps for internally displaced persons on both sides of the Sudan-Chad border. We also deplore the continued use of rape as a weapon of war in Darfur, with an increasing targeting of young girls. My delegation urges the commitment of all parties to put an end to these violations and to grant United Nations entities unimpeded access for monitoring and verification purposes.

In Chad, as the Secretary-General's report describes, the forced recruitment and use in armed conflict of children is all too widespread and is practiced by all parties to the conflict, with thousands of children continuing to be held by armed forces and groups. My delegation urges all parties to permit access by the United Nations monitors and others attempting to ascertain the extent of the problem, and welcomes the news that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is currently working to increase its child protection staff in Chad.

The United States would also like to take this opportunity to focus on the important, but sometimes forgotten processes that occur after a child has been demobilized. Often, the reintegration of children into their communities is not as thorough as we would prefer. Recidivism or the inability of a child to function properly within his family or community units is an issue of great concern to all of us from a human standpoint, and certainly to my Government as a major donor to such programmes. The United States applauds the hard work of UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and their partners. We encourage all Member States to allow full access and cooperation in order to accomplish the goals of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration.

My Government fully supports the effort by the Secretary-General, his Special Representative and the Security Council to end the unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers. However, we must note two areas of disagreement with the Secretary-General's report.

First, with respect to the recommendation in paragraph 166, we do not agree that the Security Council should have a general policy or practice of referring cases to the International Criminal Court. Different States have different views about the best mechanism for combating crimes against children. We think it important to bear in mind that not all United Nations Member States are parties to the Rome Statute, and those who are not need to be taken into account.

Secondly, as to the Secretary-General's suggestion in paragraph 171 that Member States should address immediately the subject of cluster munitions, my delegation would also ask that the Working Group focus on the substantial issues already and clearly within its mandate. Discussion of cluster munitions, for example, is better left to weapons experts operating through the United Nations Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons.

The recruitment or use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law and other abuses, such as the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, denial of humanitarian access to children and attacks against schools and hospitals, are unacceptable acts. It is our duty as members of the Security Council to do as much as we can to eliminate the tragedy of children affected by armed conflict, and we listened carefully to suggestions shared by previous speakers on how the Council can best do so.

My Government remains committed to using the tools available, including regular assessments and reporting, public condemnation, the deployment of child protection advisers in United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions as appropriate and targeted and gradual measures against violators, to end this tragedy.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are pleased, Mr. Minister, to see you presiding over the work of the Security Council today. We are grateful to Ms. Coomaraswamy, Ms. Veneman and the representative of civil society for the updated information they provided on the situation with regard to the protection of children in armed conflict.

The Russian Federation is committed to ensuring the rights of children and will continue its active endeavours to that end. These include, in particular, our intention to ratify the relevant Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the near future.

We thank the Secretary-General for having prepared his report (S/2007/757), which we have studied with great attention. We take note of its focus on practical measures and its copious compilation of facts. We share the Secretary-General's concern at the deteriorating situation of children in Afghanistan and Iraq. We lay stress on the responsibility of all parties, including the multinational forces, to ensure the safety and security of civilian populations and to ensure strict compliance with the norms of international humanitarian law. Unfortunately, the report does not touch on the deaths of children due to the actions of private security firms in Iraq. We support inclusion of the Taliban in the report's appended list of violating parties, which opens the door for consideration of the situation in the Council's Working Group.

Suitable attention should be paid to Iraq. A few days ago a tape was publicly released in which Al-Qaida terrorists are teaching Iraqi child soldiers to kidnap and kill people. Another alarming indicator is the large number of children incarcerated in military prisons of the Multinational Forces. The report refers to 800 such children, but other information puts that figure much higher. We believe UNICEF should pay attention to the causes and conditions of their captivity. We are convinced of the need for prompt deployment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in such situations.

We support the Secretary-General's proposal to send child protection advisors to Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon and including them in operations in Darfur, Chad and the Central African Republic.

We welcome some progress made in Côte d'Ivoire, which has resulted in the parties to the conflict being de-listed from the annex to the

Secretary-General's report. We agree on the need to persist in our focus on these kinds of situation so that the improvement will not be short-lived.

We again state our support for the notion of an equal approach to all serious violations, including not just the use of child soldiers but the five other categories of violations, including the murder and maiming of children. The proposal for equal consideration for all situations requires clarification, as do the recommendations for deploying the monitoring and reporting mechanism in all situations of concern. We believe the priority regarding resolution 1612 (2005) should be given to the more acute and widespread armed conflicts on the Council's agenda.

It is not possible to protect children without interaction with the Governments of countries gripped with conflict or in the post-conflict reconstruction state. In that regard, the United Nations and its Security Council should focus more on supporting national measures to strengthen that protection, on effective implementation of programmes to demobilize and reintegrate underage minors, on establishing social, economic and legal conditions for preventing recruitment and on other crimes against children.

We wish to express the hope that the comprehensive, systemic efforts of the Organization, in cooperation with interested States, will result in concrete results, easing the situation of children in armed conflict.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Let me thank the delegation of Panama for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict. My delegation thanks you, Mr. President, for coming to New York to preside over this meeting as an indication of how your delegation takes this matter in all its seriousness. Allow me also to extend our appreciation to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their contribution to this meeting today.

In the past year important precedents have been set to end impunity for crimes against children, particularly the recruitment and use of children by Government forces and armed groups. Several individuals who have committed grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict have been brought to justice by national, international and special courts and tribunals. A noteworthy achievement has been the delisting of the parties to conflict in Cote d'Ivoire from the annexes to the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757). These parties earned their delisting by ceasing the recruitment of children and taking concerted measures to identify and release children for rehabilitation. The Security Council should continue to call upon all parties to armed conflict listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report to prepare, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), concrete time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children and other violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict.

Despite positive developments in the promotion and protection of the rights of children affected by armed conflict, the Secretary-General's report illustrates that armed conflicts continue to have an impact on children around the world. Children continue to be recruited and exploited as child soldiers by parties to armed conflict. Children continue to be killed or maimed in war zones due to the use of indiscriminate weapons such as landmines and cluster munitions. Children continue to be targeted with various forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape during armed conflicts. Abductions, the denial of humanitarian access to children and the systematic and deliberate attacks on schools and hospitals by parties to armed conflict have also escalated in certain conflict situations.

The cross-cutting nature of the issue of children and armed conflict warrants the attention of the Security Council. The Council should consider giving equal weight to all six categories of grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict. Furthermore, the Council should refer to the International Criminal Court for investigation and prosecution all six violations against children in armed conflict that fall within its jurisdiction.

The task of monitoring and reporting and the submission of timely and accurate information to the Security Council by the monitoring and reporting mechanism could be enhanced by mainstreaming child protection in United Nations peacekeeping operations. The inclusion of child protection advisers should therefore be considered when reviewing or creating mandates for United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions. The role of child protection advisers would contribute to more-consistent advocacy and response for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict.

Furthermore, a zero-tolerance policy should be implemented with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations peacekeeping and related personnel. The implementation of a comprehensive strategy for assistance and support to the victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel is also important so that all children who are victims of, or born as a result of, such abuse receive support.

The reintegration and rehabilitation of all children who have been associated with armed forces or armed groups remains a priority. The international community should therefore continue to provide adequate resources to develop and support national rehabilitation and reintegration programmes that are relevant and effective so as to ensure long-term sustainability and success of such interventions. Those programmes should also take into account the special concerns of girl combatants and girls associated with armed groups.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. Minister, for being here today and presiding over our meeting. Our thanks go also to your Ambassador, Mr. Arias, for organizing today's open debate on what we have all agreed is a crucial and deeply worrying issue. I join others in thanking our French colleagues for their excellent leadership of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

The United Kingdom is committed to playing an active role in international efforts to protect children affected by armed conflict. We welcome the valuable and high-quality work of Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict. We are grateful to her for her briefing today, and also for the briefings by Ms. Veneman and Ms. Becker.

The United Kingdom supports the Secretary-General's recommendation to include child protection advisers within the mandates of peacekeeping and relevant political missions in future to strengthen monitoring and reporting.

We also recognize the role of non-governmental organizations and civil society groups on the ground, which often operate at personal risk and without whose support this mechanism could not operate half as effectively as it does.

We welcome this latest report, and we are pleased to note a number of positive developments. The recent evidence suggesting that active recruitment and use of children by armed groups in Côte d'Ivoire has ended is encouraging. The engagement of the Government of Nepal in preparation for the release and rehabilitation of child combatants is also welcome, although implementation of these plans is overdue.

The decrease in unlawful recruitment of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a further positive sign. The cooperation of the authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the International Criminal Court on the indictment of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo and Germain Katanga, and in the recent arrest of Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui, is very welcome. Nevertheless, serious challenges remain, not least with regard to abuses perpetrated by illegal armed militia in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The United Kingdom welcomes the fact that parties to conflict in countries such as the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Burma and the Sudan are cooperating with monitoring and reporting mechanisms and have made progress on concrete time-bound action plans to stop recruitment of children and other violations and abuses. But greater engagement is needed.

We would welcome further details on progress made in the development and implementation of the action plans of parties within Burma. We urge the Myanmar Government to adhere to its commitment to the Special Representative to cooperate in establishing a monitoring and reporting mechanism.

All six grave violations outlined in the report continue to be of great concern to the United Kingdom. Bearing in mind the Secretary-General's recommendation, we are ready to contribute to a review of the violations that trigger the listing of a party in the annexes of his reports.

With that in mind, we are especially concerned that instances of sexual and gender-based violence during conflict, including rape, have increased, in particular, in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. There is evidence that rape is being used as an instrument of war in those regions to terrorize local populations. Further data collection and analysis is needed to provide a basis on which to hold those responsible to account.

It is important that such crimes do not go unpunished. The United Kingdom fully supports the role of the International Criminal Court in investigating and prosecuting these and other violations and abuses against children in armed conflict that fall within its jurisdiction.

To be relevant, the Security Council's work on children and armed conflict has to have an impact on the ground. As I have emphasized, progress has been made, but serious challenges remain. We must continue to evaluate our efforts and to monitor the implementation of our Working Group's conclusions. A number of persistent violators are mentioned in the report before us. The United Kingdom strongly believes that the Security Council and its Working Group should make full use of the range of options for addressing systematic violations, as set out in resolution 1612 (2005) and in the Working Group's toolkit. That might involve use of targeted measures against perpetrators who refuse to undertake the actions we demand of them. Certainly, inaction should not be an option.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, Burkina Faso joins other members of the Council in welcoming you, along with Mr. Charles Michel, Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium, and Mr. Vittorio Craxi, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy. Your participation in this debate, Sir, shows the importance that you attach to the question of children and armed conflict.

We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her very instructive information. We also commend the Working Group, chaired by France, for its meticulous follow-up on this very important question. Obviously, we cannot fail to thank Ms. Ann Veneman and Ms. Jo Becker for their valuable information on this subject.

As we all know, the background of this scourge is still marked with horrors. The terrible reality is that thousands of children continue to die each year from the direct impact of war, and that thousands more die from indirect consequences, including malnutrition, disease, psychiatric conditions and mental disorders.

In fact, the report notes the persistence of serious violations against children by illegal armed groups and by some governmental forces and indicates that, in spite of the setting of a statutory minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces through national and international legislation, in particular the 25 May 2000 National Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, thousands of children are still being abducted, recruited and forcibly used as soldiers in areas of armed conflict.

In addition, we deplore the fact that violence stemming from clashes, cluster bomb or mine explosions and attacks against schools and hospitals continues to kill thousands of children and to wound a very significant number. Another unfortunate crime relates to blocked deliveries of humanitarian assistance due to growing insecurity as result of ambushes, thefts and killings, all in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

It is thus vital that appropriate measures be taken to spare the lives of children and to encourage and facilitate humanitarian action.

Here, we wish to make a few recommendations, first of all, to Member States. We call upon Governments to criminalize the recruitment of child soldiers and to enact legislation to protect humanitarian action. We encourage States that have not yet done so to ratify and ensure compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts.

Then, with respect to parties to conflicts, we urge the international community to do everything it can to ensure that parties do not target schools and, indeed, that they make a commitment to protect them. Parties to conflicts must commit themselves to sparing primary health-care services, including water delivery, and they must guarantee safe passage for humanitarian organizations so that they can deliver assistance and services to children, including in resettlement and refugee camps.

With respect to aid and assistance organizations, we call on donors, on a priority basis, to include in their emergency programmes support for health and education so that in time of armed conflict education and the delivery of sanitation and health services for children will continue in camps for refugees or internally displaced persons.

Finally, we urge the Security Council to consider measures — coercive measures, if possible — against any party to an armed conflict that continues to systematically violate legal provisions established to protect children in a period of armed conflict. In particular, it is the Security Council's duty to ensure full implementation of all of its relevant resolutions, including resolution 1612 (2005), and to ensure strict compliance with the recommendations of its Working Group, with which parties are called upon to cooperate more.

Here, Burkina Faso welcomes the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children in armed conflicts, whose daily action towards its objectives has had a deterrent effect. We also call for an extension of the mechanism to all cases of violations, and we encourage all those who have joined it to be frank and productive in cooperating with it.

Ongoing and systematic consideration of the question of children and armed conflict shows the extent of the Security Council's grave concern. Children are the future of humanity. Therefore, we must never cease to denounce anything that seriously threatens their existence and their future.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank you, Sir, for making a special trip to New York to preside over this meeting. China welcomes the presence of Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France; Mr. Charles Michel, Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium; and Mr. Vittorio Craxi, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy. I wish to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her briefing and Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, for her statement. In addition, I welcome the presence of Ms. Jo Becker, representative of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, and thank her for her statement.

China is very much concerned about the violations committed against children in armed conflicts in various countries. China is opposed to the recruitment and use of child soldiers and to other violations committed against children in armed conflicts. We support the efforts of the United Nations, including the Security Council, to enhance the protection of children in armed conflict. On this occasion, I should like to emphasize the following points.

First, the Security Council should strengthen its efforts to prevent conflict and maintain peace with a view to providing protection for children by preventing, reducing and resolving the causes of armed conflicts. The need to protect children in armed conflicts arises out of the conflicts themselves. Therefore, the Council should base itself on efforts to resolve armed conflicts, by taking actions within its mandate to reduce the number of such conflicts. Meanwhile, efforts should be made to enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and to improve the humanitarian situations in conflict areas.

In the current situation, children in some conflict areas have become victims of the escalation of conflict, while the positive progress made in peace processes in other areas has given children hope for a better future. That proves once again that the Security Council should give great attention to efforts to resolve conflicts.

Secondly, in efforts to address the issue of children and armed conflict, the role of the Governments concerned must be consistently respected and supported, as emphasized repeatedly in resolution 1612 (2005). Those Governments bear primary responsibility for protecting their children. Other parties must seek the cooperation of the Governments concerned in a joint effort to address the violations committed against children in armed conflicts. The Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts should enhance their communication with the Governments concerned. They should acknowledge and support the positive measures that those Governments have taken, so as to improve mutual trust. At the same time, the issue of children must not be politicized. The protection of children should not be used as a pretext for interference in a country's internal affairs.

Thirdly, resolution 1612 (2005) should continue to serve as a basis for improving and perfecting the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the efforts of the Working Group. Since the mechanism's main task is to collect information and carry out work on the ground, it must seek the cooperation of the Governments concerned. We hope that the Secretary-General will assess the achievements and inefficiencies of the mechanism so that it can be further improved during the next phase of work.

Under the coordination of France, as Chair, the Working Group of the Security Council has considered the issue of children in quite a number of countries and has submitted relevant recommendations to the Council. We hope that the Working Group will maintain its professionalism, seek to address relevant issues through cooperation and constructive consultation with the Governments concerned and submit effective recommendations to the Council.

China has always supported the use of dialogue to resolve specific issues. China has always opposed the wilful use or threat of use of sanctions in the Security Council. Caution is called for in dealing with the issue of children and armed conflict, as well as in using sanctions.

Conflicts vary and thus must not be addressed through a one-size-fits-all approach. Once again, China calls upon all parties to armed conflicts to truly honour their obligations, abide by international humanitarian law and respect and protect children's rights. In post-conflict reconstruction efforts, the international community should place priority on reintegrating children into family, school and society and should ensure that adequate resources are provided in that regard.

If we are to resolve the issue of children and armed conflict, efforts by the Security Council alone will be far from sufficient. We encourage UNICEF, the World Bank and other international institutions to play a greater role in helping the countries concerned to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflicts. We also welcome the positive role played by non-governmental organizations.

Before concluding, I wish to inform participants in this meeting that, not long ago, China ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and has therefore become a party to the Protocol. We call on all countries that have not yet done so to ratify and accede to the Protocol. China hopes that, through joint efforts by all parties, the situation of children in armed conflicts will be effectively improved so that children can have a better tomorrow.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): The delegation of Viet Nam is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over this important debate of the Security Council. Your presence attests to the importance that Panama attaches to the work of this body, which is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. We look forward to continuing to work closely with your delegation to achieve our common goals.

I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UNICEF and the representative of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict for their briefings. We also welcome the high-level participation of France, Belgium and Italy in this debate.

In children, we see our hope for a better world tomorrow. In children, therefore, we invest our best resources. We have committed to saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to making this world a world fit for children. In carrying out our commitments, we have achieved progress in some parts of the world; in others, we are continuing to see children killed, maimed and suffering from all sorts of ill-treatment in situations of armed conflict. For those who, by chance, escape the killings and those who are being told to kill, the negative impacts of such acts are not much different.

The current report presents us with both progress and challenges. While noting positive developments in some African, Asian and Latin American countries, as reflected in the decrease in the number of cases of recruitment and use of children in situations of armed conflict or as reflected in the measures the Governments in question have taken to prevent or punish those acts, we share the concern over this continued practice.

This together with acts such as attacks on schoolchildren, sexual abuse of children by those who are mandated and paid to protect them, torture of children or their deprivation of food and education constitute serious violations of children's basic rights as recognized in international human rights and humanitarian laws and in specific provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Condemning those violations, Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and previous relevant Council resolutions call upon all parties concerned to undertake measures to protect children affected by armed conflict and ensure their rights and well-being.

Concerning the implementation of these resolutions, we share the view on the need for a broad strategy of conflict prevention that addresses the root causes of armed conflict in a comprehensive manner in order to enhance the protection of children on a long-term basis, including by promoting sustainable development, poverty eradication, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law and respect for and protection of human rights. In this connection, we recognize the important role and contributions of UNICEF and other specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

Resolution 1612 (2005) requested the Secretary-General to implement a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the issue of children in armed conflict. While commending the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in preparing the report at hand, we wish to stress that in order to ensure its quality, reliability and objectivity, strengthened dialogue and cooperation with national Governments, who bear the primary and ultimate responsibility to protect and care for the children of their own countries, is of vital importance, as are consultations with the United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations.

Some Governments complained — rightly or wrongly — that they had not been consulted with regard to their views that the situations in their respective countries did not constitute armed conflicts and that those situations should not be mentioned in the report at all. This matter deserves the Council's attention.

Equal treatment of all situations of armed conflict can also be an area for improvement. The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), which has put forth many plausible efforts, should improve its performance and working method with a view to putting greater emphasis on prevention.

One of the first signatories of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Viet Nam has also signed and verified the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and submitted its periodic implementation reports. All basic legal documents of the country, such as the constitution, the law on military duties and the civil code, provide for measures to ensure that children under 18 are not recruited into the armed forces and do not engage in direct combat.

We look forward to contributing our part towards full and effective implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions, including those of the Security Council, with a view to creating a world fit for children.

Finally, we thank the delegation of France for the draft presidential statement on this matter and look forward to working constructively with the other Council members for its early adoption.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to warmly welcome the new Permanent Representative of Croatia, Ambassador Neven Jurica, who was a distinguished representative of his country to the Government of Panama and with whom there is a link of friendship and esteem.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): At the outset, Mr. President, allow me to thank the Security Council presidency of Panama for organizing the open debate on children and armed conflict.

I would also like to use this opportunity to welcome the presence among us of the Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Panama, Mr. Samuel Lewis-Navarro, as well as Their Excellencies Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, and Mr. Charles Michel, the Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium.

We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General on children in armed conflict and commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, as well as the non-governmental organizations working on the ground.

Croatia welcomes the Security Council's active engagement in addressing violations against children in armed conflict in the past nine years. The Council's adoption of action plans and the practice of the independent reporting and monitoring mechanism have significantly contributed to the ending of recruitment of children by parties to armed conflict. However, stronger Council action is needed to ensure that all parties to armed conflict act in compliance with relevant Council resolutions and other relevant international instruments in order to secure the protection of children.

Croatia strongly endorses the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General. If adopted and implemented by Governments, those recommendations will create a significant step forward in addressing the current scope of monitoring and reporting, which is currently too limited.

In particular, Croatia believes that reporting on the six grave violations against children should not be contingent solely upon whether a country is listed by the Secretary-General as recruiting child soldiers. Application of the monitoring and reporting mechanism needs to be expanded to include all of those violations in all situations identified in both annexes of the report of the Secretary-General.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the rising sexual violence against children and women in situations of armed conflict as an unacceptable method of warfare. We encourage the Security Council to use targeted measures when needed and in accordance with resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1612 (2005), where special measures are called for in order to protect women and girls from gender-based violence.

Croatia strongly supports the work of child protection advisers in all of the missions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, as well as the work of United Nations mission personnel guarding internally displaced persons camps, as it has become evident in the report of the Secretary-General that those areas have become the recruiting grounds for child soldiers.

Croatia continues to advocate a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual abuse of women and children and consequently trains Croatian participants in the 15 United Nations missions in which it participates on issues of child rights. We would therefore encourage all troop-contributing countries to do the same.

We urge Governments to end impunity for perpetrators accused of committing violations against children in armed conflict. We believe that the Security Council should refer those violations to the International Criminal Court in cases where national systems fail to address them, as proposed by the Secretary-General.

Croatia is actively engaged in the work of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We would like to see the strengthening of the Working Group's methods by the use of organized briefings with concerned countries six months after the adoption of the Working Group's conclusions on the situation in those countries concerned. In that way, the Working Group and the concerned country would be given an opportunity to review the progress achieved based on the work of both parties. We urge the Working Group to start using all the possible actions provided in the tool kit, as needed, especially field trips followed by a report.

We urge all parties to armed conflict to stop using child soldiers and to start acting in compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, including the Paris Principles. While working in the Security Council, member States have a responsibility to protect peace and security for children, especially where they are being brutally exploited. If a whole generation of children is being systematically ruined, either physically or mentally, there can be no positive changes for the future of their respective countries.

Allow me to also express the support of my country for the idea of the adoption of a new Security Council resolution that would provide a stronger mechanism for the protection of children in armed conflicts.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to begin by thanking you, Sir, and your country for convening this important debate. As you well know, Costa Rica shares with Panama a particular concern for children and a special love of peace, which is expressed in the shared desire of our peoples to live without a military force.

I thank the Secretary-General for his seventh annual report on children and armed conflict, and Ms. Coomaraswamy for her statement. I also thank Ms. Veneman and Ms. Becker of Watchlist for their statements, which have certainly enriched the debate.

The situation of children in zones of armed conflict has been and will continue to be a source of ongoing concern to the United Nations. The calamities of war do not distinguish between children and adults and afflict them equally; however, many of those calamities are more serious with respect to children. Being abandoned, orphaned, uprooted or disabled and lacking opportunity particularly affect the hope for a better life that children should always be able to cherish. It is true that encouraging progress has been made in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers in some countries, but it is also true that there has been none in many other areas affected by violent conflict, where the use of children to settle the scores of their elders is a flagrant violation of their most fundamental rights.

Children who are manipulated or forced to carry a rifle instead of books beneath their arm need us to do more than hold an annual debate. They need us to name those who compelled them and to include those names on the list of transgressors. They need decisive action from this Council. It is imperative that we fight impunity with determination.

Costa Rica maintains that children who are used by armed groups and fall victim to abuse and grave systematic violations of their rights need the Council to engage in a serious assessment of applicable effective measures and sanctions against those who persist in such deplorable conduct. The Council has a responsibility to the children of the world to ensure that all its resolutions are complied with. In that respect, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should regularly provide comprehensive information on the crimes to the sanctions committees, where such exist. The Working Group should also recommend to the Council measures and sanctions against those who consistently violate its resolutions where no relevant sanctions committee exists.

It is time for the Council to address with greater resolve the existence of solid national and international mechanisms to ensure that those responsible for such crimes are brought to justice. They cannot go unpunished. If we are to guarantee the rights of children, we believe it essential to set aside national interests and convenience, which are always short-sighted and far removed from our grand collective objectives. The Council should not shy from referring the cases of the most notorious perpetrators of crimes against children to the International Criminal Court. That would send a powerful message of intolerance of those who do not hesitate to sacrifice children to their narrow selfish concerns. Effective Security Council action in that area requires us immediately to review the criteria of the monitoring and reporting mechanism so that we can more appropriately and effectively address each of the six serious violations established in resolution 1612 (2005).

I cannot fail to refer to the alarming increase of sexual violence that is used as a weapon of war against thousands of girls and that provides a clear argument for why we should attach equal importance to all grave violations. It is also incumbent upon the Council to ensure that protection measures are commensurate with the needs of each case. It is the responsibility of all States to protect their peoples, and the responsibility to protect is especially important with respect to children. When a State is unable to protect its children, it is the obligation of the international community to fill that gap.

I cannot conclude without reiterating our condemnation of the killing and mutilation of children by mines and cluster munitions. For Costa Rica, it is an unshirkable obligation of all those participating in armed conflict to provide precise information on the quantity and location of such artefacts, as well as any other information relevant to the clean-up and rehabilitation of contaminated areas. It is urgent that we make progress in the Oslo process of drafting a legally binding instrument to prohibit the use, production, sale and storage of cluster munitions.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): I should like to preface our statement by expressing our profound appreciation at seeing you, Sir, preside over our deliberations today. We wish also to warmly acknowledge the participation of Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France; Mr. Charles Michel, Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium; and Mr. Vittorio Craxi, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

We wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her important briefing, as well as the Executive Director of UNICEF and the representative of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict for their statements. We should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his important report.

This timely meeting reflects the strong desire of the Council to address an issue of paramount importance: the welfare and security of children in armed conflict. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the various forms of violence committed against children in armed conflict. The sight of children carrying machine guns and other weaponry and engaging in combat is absolutely unacceptable and totally reprehensible. Indeed, it is an affront to international humanitarian law, which clearly prohibits such practices, either by armed forces or armed groups.

We, the Security Council, have to act, not only against those abuses but also to work together with the concerned States to eradicate them. We believe that those issues can be comprehensively resolved when the relevant parties work together and cooperate in a spirit of partnership and good faith. Such a spirit can ensure that the requisite level of trust is built among the parties in order to ensure the sustainability of our efforts.

When addressing this issue in the Council, we sometimes fail to remember that most of the situations outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/727) pertain to developing countries facing complex and sometimes insurmountable difficulties. Should we neglect that notion, at some point in the future we might find ourselves at an impasse. The Council can continue to lodge requests with those countries to address the issues, yet progress in implementation also depends upon building national capacities.

We strongly believe that the issue before us can be properly addressed only by adopting a broad strategy of conflict prevention and by tackling the root causes of armed conflict, with their attendant negative impacts on children. Ultimately, the promotion of sustainable development, poverty eradication, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law and respect for and protection of human rights are the best guarantors of the welfare of children.

It is for those pertinent reasons that we support and further encourage development agencies to participate in addressing root causes. They should be at the forefront of our efforts. They can make a meaningful and concrete contribution to addressing the welfare and well-being of children and preventing the recurrence of those deplorable practices.

The successful release, rehabilitation and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed conflict require a comprehensive approach. It should be recognized that the Security Council's attention and the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General are not taking place in a vacuum. Not least, synergy is required among the long-established relevant United Nations entities focused on the welfare of children, most notably UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme.

On a specific point, the report made a clear assessment that the use of cluster munitions is causing lethal and irreparable damage to children, not only in armed conflict situations themselves but also in the aftermath of conflict. We strongly deplore the use of such munitions targeted directly or indirectly at children. Remedial actions in the form of rehabilitation and reintegration must be sought. Furthermore, we are gravely concerned about the growing so-called collateral damage that has taken the lives of many children. The Council, for its part, should pronounce itself clearly in rejecting the practice by State or non-State actors of indiscriminately utilizing mine-infesting weapons.

With regard to the next report on this issue, we are of the view that the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General should continue to spare no effort in further improving and refining its methodology in drafting and formulating the report, in particular by making reference to countries in armed conflict situations. The credibility and authority of the Office lie in the ability to maintain its objectivity and independence, as well as to forge constructive cooperation with the States concerned.

Lastly, Indonesia always maintains its principled views that transparency and inclusiveness are the bedrock of the work of all international organizations and their affiliated entities. We therefore recognize importance of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in continuing to enhance its methods of work.

Finally, we also wish to thank and pay tribute to France for its leadership in the preparation of the draft presidential statement on this issue that is before the Council.

Mr. Kouchner (France) (*spoke in French*): The tragedy of child soldiers forces us to be determined and uncompromising. In spite of the countless and inevitable difficulties, of which we are all aware, our sole objective should be the eradication of this barbarous phenomenon. That is why I am pleased that I could come from Paris to be here today with participants in a project that poses a challenge to us all. This issue constitutes an affront to all that we are. The United Nations must play a central role in combating this hateful form of slavery that turns victims into assassins.

The establishment in 2005 of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has already made it possible for us to act. That innovative and profoundly original mechanism — in which France had a major role in establishing and over which we have had the honour to preside since its inception — has resulted in tangible progress. Thousands of children have been freed and returned to civilian life — especially in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and numerous other countries, which I shall forego naming. Recommendations have been made with regard to 10 of the 12 situations on the agenda. The Working Group will soon take up the last two pending cases, namely, those of the Philippines and Colombia. Lastly, for the first time, we are going to remove a country from that sad list — Côte d'Ivoire.

Those considerable gains could not have been achieved without the determination of the members of the Security Council, which I commend. But we know that they also owe a great deal to Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict. I pay tribute to her efforts, as well as those of UNICEF. I also wish to acknowledge the cooperation, in some cases on a voluntary basis, of all the countries affected by this terrible scourge. I thank them warmly.

In spite of those significant successes, I do not wish to give the impression that all the problems are being resolved. We still have much to do. There is the reappearance of children in the battlefields of Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burma. I recently visited those countries, and I could tell of the horror still fresh in my mind. Just today, the Central African Republic and Afghanistan were placed on the list of situations of concern. There are many things to remind us daily of the forever unfinished nature of this struggle. As always, the international community must remain mobilized and redouble its efforts.

France would in particular like to see a strengthening of the deterrent character of the Working Group. Its members must not shy away from adopting strong targeted sanctions. Otherwise, what are we here for? This is an issue that pertains to its credibility. There is no credible deterrence without real sanctions.

International criminal justice — the International Criminal Court or other special tribunals — has made essential progress this year through remarkable actions, especially against Germain Katanga, Charles Taylor and Colonel Mathieu Ngudjolo, among others, charging them with the use and recruitment of children under the age of 15. The Working Group must follow up those actions by calling for the imposition of sanctions against uncooperative parties.

The Working Group's mandate is not limited to the issue of child soldiers alone. Although that is certainly its main priority, it also considers and formulates recommendations concerning five other grave violations of children's rights, including sexual violence. During a visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo last month, I was able to see on the ground the seriousness and extent of the widespread, systematic and premeditated use of sexual crime as an instrument of war. That barbarity concerns us all. There, too, our failure to act would be reprehensible. I welcome the fact that the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo recognizes this as the most serious crime.

The Council's Working Group must absolutely strengthen its action on this question. In its recommendations it must demand that the belligerents draw up action plans to combat sexual violence and follow through on their implementation. Some might find it paradoxical that we ask the belligerents themselves to combat these crimes, but it is essential. At the same time, the military leadership must bear this in mind. It may be a paradox, it may even seem immoral, but it is effective. The Working Group should strengthen its efforts to combat impunity by relentlessly demanding the arrest of those responsible for rape and call on Governments to act in this regard.

In addition, I believe the time has come to reflect together on the possibility of permitting the Working Group to deal with the tragedy of sexual violence, independently of whether or not there are child soldiers in the country concerned. That would indisputably be a major step forward. Just as we came to grips with the problem of child soldiers, I am sure that we will reach a consensus on the need to remedy sexual violence.

As I said a moment ago, action by the Security Council is indispensable to moving forward on this question. Such action does not prevent other initiatives.

The European Union therefore adopted guidelines and an action plan on this question in 2003, in addition to a list of priority situations in which it will intervene in the future. The Slovene presidency of the European Union has decided to make children in armed conflict its priority in the area of human rights, a decision about which I am delighted.

France, for its part, organized together with UNICEF, in February 2007, a ministerial conference entitled "Free Children from War," at which 59 countries signed on to the Paris Commitments to protect children unlawfully recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups, a collection of principles and good practices that will, we hope, significantly strengthen our efforts. Following that success, we organized, again together with UNICEF, a ministerial follow-up conference in October 2007, at which seven more countries joined the Paris Commitments. On 16 January 2008, a few days ago, we held a working meeting with the principal relevant actors that led to the establishment of a follow-up forum for the Paris Commitments, which Minister Rama Yade deals with. Its first meeting is scheduled to be held in September 2008 on the sidelines of the General Assembly session. I would like to thank members in advance for their active and resolute participation in that meeting.

Once again, this is a cause that must mobilize us all, completely and tirelessly. It is the least we can do for the tens of thousands of children who are innocent victims of a barbarity that through them, is an attack on the very future of our common humanity.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I will now make a statement in my capacity of Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Panama.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann Veneman, and Ms. Jo Becker of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, representative of non-governmental organizations, for their briefings. We are also pleased to welcome here the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bernard Kouchner, the Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium, Mr. Charles Michel, and the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Mr. Vittorio Craxi.

We all recognize the negative impact of armed conflicts on children. Innocent beings are deprived of an education, displaced and uprooted from their homes and haunted by the violence they witness or even commit. Lost generations are created, deprived of opportunities, which could unleash a permanent cycle of violence in their lives. The international community thus has an obligation to undertake efforts to prevent this scourge from continuing to affect children in armed conflict.

The establishment of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is evidence that neither the world nor the United Nations will continue to address these issues in a fragmented manner. That concept is clearly reflected in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, which reads:

> "We acknowledge that peace and security, development and human rights are the pillars of the United Nations system and the foundations for collective security and well-being. We recognize that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing." (*resolution 60/1, para. 9*)

On the basis of that concept, the establishment of the Working Group is worthwhile and appropriate.

Nonetheless, protecting children in situations of armed conflict is a task that the Security Council cannot and must not undertake on its own. The General Assembly must increase its efforts in that matter and guarantee that those efforts are carried out in close coordination with the Security Council, to avoid the duplication of efforts and ensure a more effective organizational approach.

In that context, we must add that the Working Group's practice of meeting with parties affected by their decisions should serve as an example for other subsidiary bodies of the Security Council, a practice that Panama has repeatedly endorsed.

With respect to the report of the Secretary-General, we welcome the important advances in the implementation of the relevant norms, standards and international legislation in the criminal field, including the conviction of members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for recruiting and using children in armed conflict in that country. Along the same lines, the arrest warrants and charges issued by the International Criminal Court against individuals who have forcefully recruited children represent concrete steps taken by the international community to put an end to the culture of impunity that exists among those who systematically violate the rights of children in situations of armed conflict.

Despite those advances, we must express our concern regarding the increasing use of camps for refugees and internally displaced persons as places from which to recruit child soldiers, a practice which aggravates the daily difficulties already faced by those children. Refugee and internally displaced children are more vulnerable to homelessness, malnutrition, lack of education and discrimination. Such difficult conditions have a psychological impact on children, predisposing them to violent behaviours and facilitating their recruitment by the warring parties in a conflict.

We express our concern regarding the proliferation of intentional and systematic attacks against schools, teachers and school buildings, where children do not only go for their education, but where they traditionally find refuge. That space must be respected. In particular, we stress our concern for the trends in the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and the excessive use of force against children.

We join all those who reaffirmed their support for the work of the International Criminal Court. We encourage that international tribunal to continue safeguarding the rights of children when investigating war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Finally, we underscore the importance of including child protection advisers in the mandates of future peacekeeping missions and relevant political missions. Likewise, we stress the need for greater concentration on the reintegration of children into society through programmatic responses at the community level, particularly in the form of education and psychosocial support, in order to increase their opportunities for participation in society.

I cannot conclude without congratulating the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Executive Director of UNICEF, and the very many non-governmental organizations, all of them, on the work that they have done to put an end to this threat to international peace and security. Similarly, let me also acknowledge the leadership that France has shown in this extremely important area. I thank them all.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council and give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, let me thank the Security Council presidency, Panama, for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict. The EU strongly welcomes the new report of the Secretary-General on Children and armed conflict (S/2007/757) and the recommendations contained therein. We also look forward to the adoption of a meaningful and operation-oriented presidential statement by the Security Council.

The EU attaches great importance to this issue and continues to be a strong supporter of the valuable work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We commend Ms. Coomaraswamy and her office for their outstanding work in raising awareness, engaging with parties to conflicts through her field visits and keeping this issue high on the agenda. We extend our full support for this mandate for the future. Further, we wish to compliment all parties engaged on the ground for their indispensable work that contributed to this report.

The report of the Secretary-General reflects both positive and negative developments in the recent past. We welcome the progress made in Colombia and call on the Government to continue to tackle the issue of the use of children by illegal armed groups and root out abuses committed by State actors. We recognize the noteworthy achievements that have taken place in Côte d'Ivoire, the decrease in reports of grave violations of children's rights in some countries and the release of a number of child soldiers. Nevertheless, we are still witnessing continuing factional violence in conflict situations like Somalia and Iraq, escalation of violence in the Middle East, deliberate attacks on schools by the Taliban in Afghanistan and high levels of sexual and gender-based violence in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi.

We strongly condemn the continuous use of rape as a method of warfare in Darfur. This scourge should be addressed by systematically bringing to justice the perpetrators of this violence. The movement of armed groups along the borders between Sudan and Chad and between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda to recruit children continues to be alarming.

The 10-year Graça Machel strategic review notes that the context of conflict over the last decade has changed dramatically. The EU condemns the relatively new phenomenon of using children as human shields or in suicide attacks. We are distressed by the evidence that points to camps for refugees and internally displaced persons as prime recruiting grounds for child soldiers, and by the number of children being detained for alleged association with armed groups in violation of international standards.

The scope of child casualties in armed conflicts in relation to small arms, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions is equally worrying. We welcome the proposal of the Secretary-General to consider concluding a binding instrument on cluster munitions. The EU is committed to concluding such a legally binding instrument that prohibits the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.

The EU supports the call from the Secretary-General urging those States that have not done so to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as a matter of priority and to sign and ratify the Optional Protocols to it. We also urge States to accelerate the process of ratification and accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The EU welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General to refer to the ICC for investigation and prosecution violations against children in armed conflicts that fall within the jurisdiction of the Court. We encourage the Council to implement such a proposal. The EU also stresses the role of national justice institutions and of transitional justice mechanisms in the context of conflict and post-conflict situations in order to end impunity for perpetrators of crimes committed against children.

The EU welcomes and is encouraged by the work already carried out by the monitoring and reporting mechanisms on children and armed conflict established by resolution 1612 (2005). We also welcome the resulting information reported to the Security Council in specific situations and their review by its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We would also compliment the Working Group for the concrete conclusions it has adopted following its review of the reports by the Secretary-General. We encourage the Working Group to continue its good work, invite the Security Council to take into account to the greatest extent possible the conclusions of its Working Group in its consideration of situations of conflict, and urge all the parties concerned to implement those conclusions.

The EU would encourage the Security Council to take appropriate and concrete measures against those parties listed in the annexes of the report, as the Secretary General proposes. Furthermore, we support the call to the Security Council to take appropriate account of all categories of grave violations, including not only the recruitment and use of children, but also the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violations, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children.

We welcome the attention paid in its conclusions by the Security Council Working Group to all violations committed against children. Similarly, situations of concern in all parts of the world need to be addressed by the Security Council and the international community as a whole, in order to effectively protect the rights of children in armed conflict. The EU would encourage the Security Council to review the violations that trigger the listing of a party in the annexes attached to the report of the Secretary-General. As a first step, the criteria that trigger the listing of a party might be expanded to include the crime of rape and other grave sexual and gender-based violence against children.

Still in the sphere of monitoring and reporting, the EU reiterates the importance of the inclusion of specific child protection advisers with a clear division of labour, reporting lines and guidance within the United Nations system. Their performance should be enhanced through the review outlined in the lessons learned study.

Additionally, we welcome the Secretary-General's indications of progress in action plans for some parties to conflict situations, such as in Côte d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic, Burma/Myanmar and the Sudan as well as Sri Lanka and Uganda. In order to see even more progress in the future, access to all parties involved, including non-State parties, must be guaranteed. Moreover, setting up concrete time-bound action plans and ensuring that the parties involved implement them needs further constant monitoring by the Security Council in all situations that warrant such action plans. Member States too should play a better role in facilitating dialogue with parties involved in armed conflict.

The EU is proceeding with the mainstreaming of children's rights into our advocacy, policies and programmes, and we continue to monitor the situation of children in armed conflicts, particularly through the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. Moreover, the EU advocates a systematic mainstreaming of human rights, gender issues and child protection. That is reflected in the Checklist for Integration of the Protection of Children affected by Armed Conflict into European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) Operations as well as in the Conclusions on Sudan/Chad/Central African Republic, both adopted by the Council of the EU.

Furthermore, we promote a comprehensive approach to the issue. We believe that it is only by addressing the development, humanitarian, security and human rights aspects that we can successfully prevent conflicts and their impact on children. Such a vision is fully reflected in the recently adopted Commission Communication entitled "A Special Place for Children in EU External Action". The issue of children associated with armed conflicts was also included in the 2007 Joint EU-Africa Strategy and Action Plan.

Additionally, a vast range of projects to combat the effects of armed conflict on children are being financed by the European Union. Since 2000, the European Community Humanitarian Office has provided more than €100 million for projects focusing specifically on the needs of children in armed conflicts. Moreover, through the thematic programme Investing in People, the Commission is supporting the project entitled "Prevention and rehabilitation measures addressing children associated with armed forces and groups or involved in the worst forms of child labour in conflict or post-conflict situations", undertaken by the International Labour Organization.

In 2007, EU action focused on concrete strategies and projects to tackle this issue in the 13 priority countries and potential new areas of conflict; on continued support for international efforts and instruments; and on improving United Nations monitoring mechanisms, including early-warning methods. In particular, the EU expressed its support for the development, adoption and implementation of the Paris Commitments and Principles to protect children unlawfully recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups, and invites all stakeholders to make extensive use of those documents in their efforts to address the issue of children and armed conflict.

We must pay special attention to sexual and gender-based violence, girl combatants and girls associated with armed groups and ensure that they are included in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. Sexual exploitation of children by State and non-State parties remains a widespread atrocity, affecting millions of victims. Such violence is not an inevitable consequence of war, and it needs to be addressed, including through concrete commitments by the parties to armed conflicts to take special measures to prevent such acts and punish the perpetrators.

The EU welcomes the measures that have been adopted to combat sexual exploitation and abuses by peacekeeping personnel. We recognize the importance of the United Nations comprehensive strategy on that issue. The EU also welcomes the Policy Statement and the work carried out on the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report, a greater focus needs to be placed on the reintegration of children associated with armed groups. The sustainability of DDR programmes can be enhanced by supporting national initiatives focused on recovery following demobilization, by encouraging national ownership of such programmes and by engaging with local communities and civil society organizations, while ensuring that predictable, timely, adequate and long-term international funding is available. The Paris Commitments and Principles enhance the coherence of our efforts to prevent the unlawful recruitment of children and to ensure their sustainable reintegration into families and communities.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that the EU is fully committed and stands ready to continue to work closely with the United Nations system, as well as with national and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society, to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in our efforts to relieve the suffering of children in armed conflicts. But, to meet the concerns related to children and armed conflict, we must go beyond holding the perpetrators accountable; we need to respond to the needs of the survivors of such violence.

Let us therefore unite our efforts and build on the progress already made towards a future in which children will no longer be victims of armed conflict. We strongly encourage the Council to begin discussions on a new draft resolution on children and armed conflict that builds upon the experience gained and lessons learned in the three years since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), taking into consideration the recommendations proposed by the Secretary-General in his report.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Iceland.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

We warmly welcome the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757) submitted pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004). Widespread and unacceptable patterns of violations against children are recorded. Armed forces and armed groups that recruit and exploit children in armed conflicts are named. Tangible results have also been achieved.

We fully endorse the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report concerning child rights and the role of child protection in future peacekeeping missions. The five Nordic countries support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Security Council give equal weight to all six categories of grave violations set out in resolution 1612 (2005). Nevertheless, we are mindful of the need to expand the efforts of the Working Group, with due regard for existing resources and capabilities. In view of those constraints, it has been suggested that priority be accorded to violations perpetrated with an intent to harm children.

In that regard, one of the most disturbing chapters in the Secretary-General's report concerns sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict. Women and girls are the largest and most vulnerable group of victims. Sexual and gender-based violence is not an inevitable consequence of war; it can and must be prevented. In line with the recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General and the Working Group on children and armed conflict, we support the inclusion of gender-based violence among the violations listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report.

Only rarely are those violating the rights of children successfully prosecuted. We welcome the progress made by the International Criminal Court and the Special Court for Sierra Leone in bringing charges against individuals suspected of grave violations of the rights of the child. Nevertheless, increased efforts by national courts are necessary in order to end impunity for those who commit crimes against children. It is in the interest of Governments to cooperate closely with the United Nations monitoring and reporting mechanism to bring to justice the perpetrators of such crimes, for the sake of reconciliation, sustainable peace and development.

The five Nordic countries, echoing the recommendation of the Secretary-General, encourage the Security Council to refer violations against children in armed conflicts to the International Criminal Court for investigation and prosecution when national Governments persistently fail to prosecute such crimes.

We endorse the Secretary-General's comprehensive recommendation that encourages Member States to conclude a binding instrument prohibiting the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians. Furthermore, we encourage the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to continue her reporting on that crucial issue.

The monitoring and reporting mechanism has greatly enhanced the Security Council's ability to receive reliable and timely information. Its collaborative nature, embodied in the country-level task forces, also highlights the importance of dialogue among the parties to a conflict, the international community and civil society in furthering the interests of children affected by armed conflict. To enhance the relevance of that approach, the Nordic countries encourage the Security Council to continue to call upon parties in all relevant situations of armed conflict to submit concrete time-bound action plans detailing their efforts to end grave violations against children. We welcome last week's decision by the Government of Colombia to take part in the mechanism.

Furthermore, the Security Council should not shy away from considering effective targeted measures against those who commit grave violations against children. We call on the Working Group to explore the full range of measures to bring persistent perpetrators to book if, for example, they fall dramatically short of their own action plan objectives or choose to ignore the mechanism altogether.

The close interest paid to this Security Council open debate bears witness to a widely shared confidence in resolution 1612 (2005) and in the mechanisms set up in its wake. The removal of parties to the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire from the Secretary-General's watch list is one example of the efficacy of resolution 1612 (2005). Further progress depends on the willingness to build on this and other successes. The Nordic countries encourage the Security Council to ensure that it pays equal attention to children affected by armed conflict whether the specific situations are on its agenda or not.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I would like to express my appreciation to the delegation of Panama for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict. I would also like to thank France for its strong leadership in chairing the Security Council Working Group on this subject. My appreciation goes also to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, and Ms. Jo Becker for their respective presentations, which have enriched our debate.

We are encouraged by the finding in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757) that noticeable progress has been made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism established by Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). Important steps have been taken by the International Criminal Court and the Special Court for Sierra Leone to end impunity for crimes against children, particularly with regard to the recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups.

The Paris Commitments and the Paris Principles, both adopted in February 2007, are two milestone documents in that they reaffirm our commitment to prevent the unlawful recruitment of children and provide model guidelines for protecting children from being forcibly associated with armed groups.

The 10-year strategic review of the Graça Machel report (A/51/306), convened jointly by Ms. Coomaraswamy and UNICEF, offered an excellent opportunity to examine issues related to children and armed conflict.

Japan supports the full implementation of Security Council resolutions on children in armed conflict, particularly resolution 1612 (2005), as well as of the monitoring and reporting system. We welcome the information that has been properly collected through the mechanisms on the violations being committed against children.

The recommendations made by the Working Group have contributed significantly to efforts to remedy such situations. It is an encouraging achievement that Côte d'Ivoire has been removed from the annex of the report since four militia groups have implemented action plans to cease the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Certainly, progress has been made with respect to protection. However, the overall situation of children affected by armed conflict in the world remains very grave. Today, the use of over 250,000 child soldiers, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual exploitation and abductions still continue. It is essential that the international community continue to support the monitoring and reporting mechanism and extend cooperation to United Nations activities, such as the deployment of child protection advisers, as appropriate, to other peacekeeping missions and political missions, as has been done in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

Japan believes it is indispensable for the Security Council and the Working Group to give equal attention to children in armed conflict in all situations of concern and to give equal weight to all six categories of grave violations.

Children are the ones who are most vulnerable when conflict breaks out. The concept of human security, focusing on the safety and security of individuals, provides a vitally important perspective for the protection and empowerment of children affected by conflict. A comprehensive and integrated approach based on such a concept is highly relevant to the entire process of protecting and empowering children who are caught in armed conflict. It must start with the prevention of recruitment of child soldiers and must include their release, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration into normal social life.

Japan, as an initiator of the Friends of Human Security in New York, will work with other interested countries to operationalize the human security approach in all the policies and programmes of the United Nations system in tackling this problem. Ensuring the protection and empowerment of children affected by armed conflict is an important challenge in successful post-conflict peacebuilding efforts as well.

The promotion of human security through the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the consolidation of peace will be one of three priorities for the coming Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV), which will be held in Yokohama in May of this year. Japan has paid high attention to the plight of child soldiers in supporting peacebuilding efforts and has extended assistance to programmes to provide support to former child soldiers in many countries, including Liberia and the countries of the Great Lakes region, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.

In closing, I would like to reiterate Japan's commitment to realizing a world where children are free from conflict. We will continue to cooperate closely with other interested partners to advance the protection and empowerment of children affected by armed conflict and to allow them to realize their many dreams, as they are supposed to.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico welcomes the convening of this debate and thanks the Secretary-General for his annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757), which was presented in January by his Special Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and which the Council is considering today.

This comprehensive and detailed report fully sets out the progress achieved in the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004). It analyses the status of implementation of measures to put an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. It refers to the progress made in the application of the monitoring mechanism and the submission of reports and provides information about the inclusion of child protection in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

My delegation wishes to highlight the determination to bring about the submission of this report, which was the result of considerable consultation, and which emphasizes the humanitarian dimension of this issue and focuses on the need to provide broad and effective protection for children endangered and affected by armed conflicts.

In this context, we also welcome the work of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and emphasize how important it is that the Security Council enable the group to recommend the imposition of selective measures against parties to armed conflict that commit serious violations against children.

This wide-ranging report allows us to stress that even though progress has been noted in certain countries, every year children suffer more as a result of armed conflict, in the light of the changing nature of the conflicts and wars that take place throughout the world. Over the past two decades, more than 2 million children have died in conflict zones; another 6 million have been left permanently handicapped; more than a quarter of a million of young people have been exploited as child soldiers in at least 30 countries; and thousands of girls have been victims of sexual exploitation, rape and prostitution. There is no region in the world immune to this trend.

In this context, Mexico shares the concerns expressed in the report of the Secretary-General, such as those relating to the ongoing recruitment of children in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons; sexual and gender-based violence against children; the detention of children presumed to be associated with armed groups; the increase in the number of systematic and deliberate attacks against students, teachers and schools; and the ongoing impunity of those who commit crimes against children, particularly the recruitment and use of children by Governmental forces or armed groups. My delegation also agrees that it is important that peacebuilding operations take into account the need to protect and reintegrate children into society. Long-term rehabilitation and development programmes linked to disarmament and demobilization must help to reintegrate those children successfully and sustainably.

Given the gravity of the situation, it is important that the Security Council pay the same attention and act with equal zeal with regard to all categories of violation of the rights of children in armed conflict — those relating not only to the recruitment and use of child soldiers, but also to the killing and mutilation of children; rape and other serious sexual crimes; kidnappings and attacks on schools and hospitals; and the denial of access to humanitarian assistance for children, as noted in the 10-year strategic review of the Graça Machel report.

It is also important for the Security Council to adopt selective and effective sanctions against persistent offenders who continue systematically to commit serious crimes against children during armed conflicts, flouting the recommendations of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the resolutions of the Council.

We also feel that peacekeeping missions and special political missions play a very important role in that process. We therefore believe it appropriate for child protection advisors to be present in such missions with a view to strengthening monitoring and responding rapidly in situations that affect children in armed conflict. My delegation also supports on-site visits by the Special Representative to obtain first-hand information of the situation on the ground.

In armed conflicts, children are the principal victims; they are the targets of those conflicts and have increasingly become their instruments. By definition, children are innocent, especially vulnerable, and the least responsible for conflicts, and yet, as we well know, they suffer disproportionately from the excesses of war. Children also represent the present and the future of our society. If we destroy them, we are also destroying our possibility of living together.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In view of the lateness of the hour and the other speakers remaining on the list, I propose, with the agreement of the Council, that we suspend the meeting and resume this afternoon.

The meeting was suspended at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations

S/PV.5834 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5834th meeting

Tuesday, 12 February 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Arias/Mr. Lewis-Navarro	(Panama)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Belle
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Somdah
	China	Mr. Du Xiacong
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Muharemi
	France	Mr. Fieschi
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Azzarello
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zheglov
	South Africa	Ms. Lazouras
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Brooker
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

08-23756 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.15 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Rwanda, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda), took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to remind all speakers, as I indicated during this morning's meeting, to limit their statements to no more than five minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Kazakhstan, on whom I now call.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): At the outset, I would like to express our gratitude to you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate on the agenda item entitled "Children and armed conflict". Today's consideration of this issue is not especially new, but it confirms the readiness of all Member States to continue work in that direction in accordance with resolution 1612 (2005) and the Secretary-General's report (S/2007/757).

We would also like to commend Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and her Office, as well as UNICEF, for their efforts to overcome this modern challenge to humankind. Our delegation fully shares the view that the protection of children in armed conflict should be considered as a significant aspect of the strategy to prevent and resolve armed conflict.

The report of the Secretary-General highlights the progress made in the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) and its monitoring and reporting mechanism, including compliance with regard to ending the recruitment and use of children by armed groups in a number of countries. In that context, it seems encouraging to note that since the last report the number of child soldiers has decreased from 300,000 to 250,000. However, as duly mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, much work remains to be done by the international community. In particular, the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts is still continuing in 13 countries. Children are forced to take part in combat operations and in killing people. Often, they are themselves also sexually abused, kidnapped or killed.

It is appalling to realize that for decades in conflict zones children have been involved in confrontations between different militant groups, lacking access to all the elements of normal life that most children around the world enjoy. Whole generations of such children have faced nothing but violence, hostility, abuse, poverty and illiteracy.

In order to put an end to the suffering and the abuse of children, we have to focus our attention on minimizing the negative consequences of being a child in a zone of conflict, including by countering the six grave violations identified by the Security Council. We believe that the crucial task for all Member States should be to take effective measures to bring to account those who perpetrate grave violations against children. To achieve those goals, there is a real legal basis for further action in the form of criminal prosecution and punishment. An effective mechanism should be established to ensure compliance with the main provisions of the conventions and protocols pertaining to the child.

I would like to emphasize that Kazakhstan ratified the relevant Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child five years ago. In doing so, we reaffirmed our strong commitment to international efforts to protect the rights of children affected by armed conflict worldwide.

We entirely support the proposal to adopt targeted measures against groups and persons who involve children in armed conflicts. We also support the Security Council's referral of such cases to the International Criminal Court for investigation and prosecution. In that connection, we believe that further toughening punishment measures and increasing

awareness about particular cases at the local, regional and global levels would have a significant effect.

Due to the vulnerability of children and the possibility that they will be re-recruited in the aftermath of conflicts, more support is also needed as regards the reintegration and rehabilitation of children who have been associated with armed groups and involved in war zones.

We also believe that a great deal must be done to avoid setting the precedent of prosecuting children for crimes committed as soldiers, as they must be considered to be victims of the actions of adults and must be provided with social protection in the framework of juvenile justice.

The future of our children who are involved in armed conflicts against their will cannot be ignored; it mostly depends on how we react and address these challenges today. The issue of protecting children in armed conflicts should be one of the main priorities on the agenda of the Security Council, and we are confident that the current discussions will greatly contribute to that process. Let us truly move from words to effective actions.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): **I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.**

Mr. Hill (Australia): **I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to participate in this debate. Australia places the highest priority on protecting children, and we remain extremely concerned about the plight of those affected by armed conflicts.**

We welcome the significant steps that have been taken to address this issue and commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her leadership and her dedication to the issue at hand.

The United Nations system must continue to draw upon its full range of expertise and coordinate its efforts to address the issue of children and armed conflict. We recognize the important role of UNICEF in child protection. We also commend Mr. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, independent expert for the Secretary-General's study on violence against children, for his work on that crucial child protection issue.

We are particularly pleased that significant progress has been made to operationalize the monitoring and reporting mechanism mandated in resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict and that the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has continued its consideration of country reports in this regard.

We commend the real progress made in Côte d'Ivoire in halting the recruitment of child soldiers and in making progress on the Ouagadougou Agreement. However, we need to maintain attention and seek further progress in all situations of children affected by armed conflicts, including those in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia.

Children in situations of armed conflict, including those displaced by conflict, are vulnerable not only to recruitment as child soldiers, but also to other grave violations, including killing and maiming, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access. All those violations are egregious, and no hierarchy can be ascribed to the abuses suffered by children in times of conflict. We would, however, encourage the triggering of the monitoring and reporting mechanism when any of those violations occur, especially for situations of rape and other acts of sexual violence.

We encourage the Council to continue to call on parties listed in the annexes of the reports of the Secretary-General to prepare time-bound action plans to stop the recruitment of children into armed forces and other violations against children. Many of those who commit violations against children in situations of armed conflict do so persistently, and have been cited repeatedly in the reports of the Secretary-General. We therefore encourage the Council to continue to consider targeted measures that may be taken against those persistent violators of children's rights.

The efforts of all key stakeholders remain essential in combating violations against children in times of conflict and ensuring adherence to relevant international law. In addition to ensuring that measures are taken at the international, regional and national levels to combat such crimes, Governments must also ensure that the perpetrators of those crimes are brought to justice. We echo the Secretary-General in highlighting the important role of the International Criminal Court in investigating and prosecuting violations against children in armed conflict that fall within its jurisdiction.

We encourage those Member States that have not done so to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court without delay.

If we, as an international community, are to create an environment in which children not only survive, but thrive — a goal of a world fit for children, which was reaffirmed at the Commemorative High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly in December 2007 — then we must reaffirm our commitment to protecting all children, particularly those affected by armed conflict, from harm and exploitation and to ensure that those who would abuse them are brought to account. Australia remains firmly dedicated to that end.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Majoor (Netherlands): The Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union. I would like to thank the Security Council presidency, Panama, for organizing this open debate on the important subject of children and armed conflict.

With the integrity of our children, the integrity of this Organization and everything it stands for is at stake. In children we see our future, and in their suffering during armed conflict we see the dark side of mankind. To our shame, children continue to be the primary victims of grave human rights violations in dozens of conflicts around the world. The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757) is a sad testimony to that reality. The Netherlands strongly supports the valuable work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and that of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

We need concerted efforts at all levels. That requires political will. The Netherlands funds a number of projects targeting children in armed conflicts. We are supporting a multi-year UNICEF project in Uganda that aims to provide vocational training in camps for children caught up in the conflict. The Netherlands contributes a total of €1.3 million to that project. We are also a major bilateral donor of the World Bank Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme in the Great Lakes region, through which many child soldiers have been demobilized and reintegrated.

Abuse truly stops only when perpetrators have been brought to justice. Anything short of that means a continuation of the violation of the victims' integrity. That is why ending impunity is a critical element in ending violations and abuses against children. Member States concerned should take effective action to bring to justice individuals responsible for violations of children's rights. Those who recruit or use child soldiers; those who rape or commit other grave sexual violence against children — they all should all be held to account.

We therefore stress the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other tribunals in the investigation and prosecution of such crimes that fall within their jurisdiction. When national systems of justice fail, either because of unwillingness or inability to genuinely prosecute such violations against children in armed conflict, the situation should be referred to the ICC. The recent arrest by the ICC of Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui, former commander of the Fronts des Nationalistes et Intégrationnistes of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a notable example. It shows how the ICC and the Congolese national authorities indeed cooperate in the fight against impunity for such crimes.

Progress has been made. The issue of children and armed conflict is higher on the agenda than it has been in the past. We commend the progress achieved by the Security Council, but there is a need for further commitment and action. For example, the current scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism should be reviewed. Child soldiers are the focus of much international concern, and rightly so, but they constitute a relatively small share of affected children. The Security Council should give equal consideration to all categories of grave violations against children in armed conflict and should include in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports a comprehensive listing of parties to armed conflict responsible for any of these grave violations. An initial expansion of the trigger mechanisms could include the crime of rape and other grave sexual violence against children. There are several reasons for this. Like the recruitment and use of child soldiers, rape and other sexual violence are intentional acts committed by individual perpetrators. Parties to armed conflict can take action to hold such perpetrators accountable for their actions. Progress in ending such violations can be measured, allowing for de-listing: an incentive for change. But more important, we cannot remain silent in the face of such hideous acts. What more reason do we need?

We may be encouraged by our efforts so far, but we should remain outraged at the continuing violence against children in armed conflict. There is no room for complacency or even a business-as-usual approach. We urge the Security Council to continue to address this issue and to fill existing protection gaps. If the political will to do so is to be found anywhere, it should be here at the core of the United Nations, in the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Gatan (Philippines): My delegation welcomes today's debate on the issue of children and armed conflict and joins the rest of the international community in seeking ways to prevent and eliminate the exploitation and devastation of the lives of children when they are involved in armed conflict.

My delegation also welcomes the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757), which attempts to provide information on various situations where children's lives are adversely affected because of conflict and strife. We condemn violations against the rights of children and express our readiness to contribute to solutions that will appropriately and effectively address the problem.

The Philippines would like to reiterate that it is our Government's policy to consider children as zones of peace, as stated in section 22, article X, of Republic Act No. 7610, otherwise known as "An Act Providing for Stronger Deterrence and Special Protection Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination", and also intended to protect children against dangers arising from armed conflict. For this reason, measures have been adopted to protect children from harm and to ensure their safety and well-being. Children rescued from conflict are accorded special treatment by Government forces.

A memorandum of agreement on the handling and treatment of children involved in armed conflict was signed in 2000 to further ensure that the rights of children are protected, and, in 2001, the President issued Executive Order No. 56, entitled "Adopting the Comprehensive Program Framework for Children Involved in Armed Conflict". This directs national Government agencies and local government units to implement its provisions. Also, by virtue of that executive order, an Inter-agency Committee on Children in Armed Conflict was created; it is functioning today as the key body that coordinates the efforts of the Philippine Government in making sure that children are not affected by or involved in armed conflict and that, if they are so involved because of their use by non-State actors, they are properly rehabilitated and reintegrated into society.

The Inter-agency Committee has focused on three areas, namely improved monitoring and reporting of cases of children in armed conflict, improved institutional coordination, and the effective rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflict and their reintegration into the community. Following recent consultations among the relevant government agencies and non-governmental partners during a strategic planning exercise conducted in June 2007, the Committee has been able to identify the current challenges faced in addressing the issue of children in armed conflict as well as the necessary next steps towards resolving it.

The Philippines recognizes the need for enhanced monitoring and reporting. It is envisioned that an operational database monitoring system on children in armed conflict, shared among the front-line agencies — namely the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Peace Process, the Commission for Indigenous Peoples, the Department of Education and the military — should be made functional and should be primarily maintained by the Department of Social Welfare and Development. In support of the provisions of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), the Government is now developing a procedure for data collection which will include information pertaining to the six violations against children enumerated in that resolution.

The Philippines recognizes that institutional coordination among the front-line agencies, as well as with the community when it encounters incidences of children in armed conflict, is essential in order to effectively address the issue of children in armed conflict and to ensure that the rights of such children are upheld. We are already implementing a comprehensive communications plan on the protection of children, designed for concerned sectors, namely the Government, the private sector, civil society and even non-State armed groups, and intended to draw support and synchronize efforts to protect the children.

On the matter of rehabilitation and reintegration, the Department of Social Welfare and Development continues to provide victims with residential care services and other social services such as financial assistance, legal assistance, counselling, skills training, values formation and spiritual enrichment, livelihood services, home life services and educational services. The Government is creating an even more comprehensive and holistic rehabilitation and reintegration programme in conflict areas with provision for the constant monitoring and evaluation that are necessary for perfecting the programme.

My delegation takes note of the specific reference in the report of the Secretary-General to the Philippines and acknowledges that there is indeed room for improvement in the documentation of violations of children's rights. This has already been recognized as a concern, and efforts are under way to strengthen coordination among the agencies that come into direct contact with children in armed conflict.

My Government looks forward to the visit of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. It looks forward also to a positive outcome of her visit. We will extend our full cooperation to her so that her findings and recommendations can contribute to the achievement of the aim of the Philippine Government to address gaps, if any, in providing protection on a nationwide scale to children affected by armed conflict. It is also our fervent wish that the visit will lead to a recognition that my country's adequate policy measures could lead to the early deletion of the Philippines from the list of annex II countries.

The Philippines has been more than willing to cooperate on the issue before us today. We would like to call upon the Working Group of the Security Council to be more transparent in its working methods. An open work environment would surely lead to enhanced cooperation and a speedier resolution of this issue, which harms our world's most valuable asset — our children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Alasania (Georgia): At the outset, Mr. President, allow me to express my appreciation to the members of the Security Council for providing us with the opportunity to address this high forum.

The delegation of Georgia fully associates itself with the statement made by the Slovenian presidency of the European Union.

Protection of children affected by armed conflicts has been one of the main priorities of the United Nations community. During the past decade, the international community has tried to place the issue firmly on its agenda. Since 1998, when the first Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict began his work and the Security Council held its first meeting on this issue, the matter has gained greater visibility.

Over the past several years, the Security Council has made good efforts in order to assist children affected by armed conflict and thereby to protect the most vulnerable, particularly through the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), which provided the basis for the establishment of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict.

We welcome the latest report of the Secretary-General on the issue of children and armed conflict (S/2007/757), and we fully share his observation that, despite some progress with respect to the protection of children in several areas, new areas of concern require immediate attention by the international community. Georgia welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendation that the mandates of all future peacekeeping and relevant political missions should include child protection advisers. Such a change will increase the effectiveness of monitoring and provide timely and accurate information with respect to the protection of children affected by conflicts.

We agree with Council members who have previously spoken that the Council must move forward and start responding to the challenges upon us. We firmly believe that every form or category of the grave violations against children must be given equal priority.

For 15 years, my country has been dealing with the consequences of ethnic conflicts, which have yielded tragic results. Besides causing a generation of youth to lose their lives during the civil war, those conflicts have produced a generation that was forced by ethnic cleansing into exile. The Government of

Georgia is making its best efforts to support refugee and internally displaced children, who have been deprived of their most fundamental right to return to their places of origin. Among other support, those children need special care to cope with their post-war psychological traumas. Although central authorities, in cooperation with international donor organizations, are able to provide special rehabilitation, education and leisure programmes to some of these children, the vast majority are still beyond the reach of such programmes.

We would like to draw the Council's attention to the intolerable situation of children living in the areas of protracted conflicts within the territory of Georgia. It is heartbreaking to see how children of all ethnic origins are becoming victims of physical and psychological violence on a daily basis. Lack of a secure environment in these areas prevents children from having a chance to become integrated members of civil society.

Here, let me note in particular the situation of Georgian-speaking children in Abkhazia, Georgia. They are deprived of one of their most fundamental rights, namely to study in their mother tongue, since the de facto regime has prohibited Georgian as a language of instruction in schools in the Gali district, which is populated mostly by Georgians.

The Secretary-General's latest report on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (S/2007/588) suggests that the language of instruction in Gali district schools remains a concern. It is highly unlikely that anyone opposing education of children in their mother tongue is thinking of reconciliation. The prohibition of education in the Georgian language in breakaway regions is intended to increasingly separate the generations brought up apart. Unfortunately, all this is a continuation of the policy of systematic cleansing of Georgians from Abkhazia, Georgia. It is ironic that oppression on the basis of language continues to take place in 2008 — the year the United Nations declared to be the International Year of Languages.

Another matter of concern to us is the problem of mines left after past military operations. Just recently, in one village in Abkhazia, Georgia a boy was killed by an anti-personnel mine that he had found on the bank of a river.

The international community must make better efforts to assist those children who have been deprived of normal life conditions. The need for action is obvious because the impact of conflict and violence on children will have consequences for the formation of their values, identity and beliefs.

The circle of violence and hatred can only be stopped through joint international efforts. In this regard, the Government of Georgia has provided channels for international organizations to be involved in the most critical confidence-building measure — bringing children from both sides of a war-torn society together, helping them to restore their faith in peaceful coexistence with each other.

Mr. President, I want to thank you again for giving me this opportunity to address you today on this matter that is very important for all of us.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of Chile, on whom I call.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Panama and you, Sir, for inviting us to debate this topic that involves acts of utmost gravity against unprotected children in flagrant violation of human rights and international humanitarian law.

As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and to Convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organization, on the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour, Chile wishes to reiterate its commitment to the initiatives designed to eliminate all forms of violence against children. We therefore strongly support multilateral actions to reduce and eradicate this scourge, and we urge the Council to use its authority to identify and punish those responsible for the atrocities documented in the recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757) and its respective recommendations.

In this context, we acknowledge the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and note with special interest the recommendations contained in her report on the subject (A/62/228), particularly those relating to the application of the 2007 Paris Principles, which represent significant progress regarding prevention and reinsertion and the special needs of the girl child in armed conflicts.

Although the international community recognizes that children are precious subjects of law, their rights are contrarily ignored, daily, in situations of armed conflict between or within States, conflicts of low intensity or armed violence in the civilian sphere. We therefore support the work done by, among others, the Working Group of the Security Council established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), as well as the work of UNICEF and civil society, which contribute to the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in the framework of this resolution.

However, the persistence of these grave acts and the impunity noted by this Council impel us to make greater efforts with respect to the implementation of this mechanism. Chile therefore believes that the Council should enhance the protection of children by allowing the expansion of the monitoring mechanism contemplated in resolution 1612 (2005), so that it can be triggered in cases of rape and other grave sexual violations, which do not constitute collateral damage and which should be urgently eradicated, as has been widely recognized by the international community.

Likewise, we call for the adoption of the recommendations made to the Council and to Member States in the Secretary-General's recent report, particularly the recommendation that the mandates of all future peacekeeping missions and relevant political missions should, where appropriate, include the presence of child protection advisers.

A decade after the publication of Graça Machel's historic report on the impact of armed conflict on children, Chile reaffirms its commitment to contribute actively to the elimination of all forms of violence affecting the world's children, from armed conflicts to urban violence. Inspired by the aphorism coined by our Nobel Prize winner Gabriela Mistral, "The future of children is always today; tomorrow will be too late", we strongly support all initiatives aimed at fulfilling international commitments in this area.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Brazil.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a pleasure for the delegation of Brazil to participate in this very important debate under the Panamanian presidency. The presence of the Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs at this morning's part of our meeting reflects Panama's commitment to the United Nations and also highlights the importance of the issue of children for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

(*spoke in English*)

I wish to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for her excellent work as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

I would like to refer to the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757), which presents a comprehensive picture of the situation of children affected by armed conflict around the world. The report confirms that, although some progress has been made, the situation of children in armed conflicts remains a source of grave concern for the international community.

Creating a world fit for children is tantamount to guaranteeing the future of all humankind. In recent years, United Nations efforts to focus international attention on child-specific issues in the context of armed conflicts have been expanding in order to respond to the demand for action, given the seriousness of the issue and the growing number of conflicts affecting children in various parts of the world.

We expect the Security Council to perform its work in close coordination with the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. An effective response to the issue of children affected by armed conflict only stands to benefit from being placed squarely within the context of the more general problem of children in need.

Ending all forms of violations against the rights of the child affected by armed conflict is our common goal. It is unacceptable that armed conflicts continue to subject children to all forms of violence, including not only the recruitment and use of children, but also killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abductions, and attacks against schools and hospitals. A strong commitment by Governments and the full cooperation of all relevant United Nations entities are essential elements in order to reverse that situation.

The work of the United Nations on children and armed conflict should be guided by the existing international framework, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child and all relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict is of particular importance in guiding the work of the United Nations.

My delegation agrees with the recommendation, contained in the Secretary-General's report, that Member States should take effective action to bring to justice perpetrators of violence against children through national justice systems. While we are encouraged by efforts of Governments in that regard, we also strongly support the strengthening of the International Criminal Court and the full implementation of its decisions in cases of violations against children in armed conflict falling within its jurisdiction.

Brazil is particularly concerned about the continuation of gender-based violence affecting girls, in particular sexual violence, which leaves a long-term, devastating impact on children and their families. Another aspect to be considered is the efforts to reintegrate former child soldiers in countries emerging from conflict and to protect such children in specific situations in which they are vulnerable, such as exposure to cluster munitions and landmines. My delegation considers that the Peacebuilding Commission has an important role to play in this area and that it should include the discussion of concrete measures for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children as part of its long-term recovery and development programmes.

The complexity of the question of children affected by armed conflict demands that all relevant entities of the United Nations, in close cooperation with Member States and non-governmental organizations, adequately address its many components, including the social and economic components, particularly with regard to demobilization and reintegration. Such broad and comprehensive coordination is essential to maximize the effect of the Council's actions in its efforts to make the best possible use of the monitoring and reporting mechanism established under resolution 1612 (2005).

In addition to the involvement of UNICEF and other relevant agencies, funds and programmes, I would like to mention the need to fully integrate into this process the newly established post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children. As mandated in General Assembly resolution 62/141, the new Special Representative and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict will cooperate and coordinate their activities, taking into account the complementarity of their respective mandates.

Brazil is fully committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in general and is determined to contribute to maximizing the effectiveness of the United Nations system in responding to the issue of children affected by armed conflict. If we are to secure a better world for future generations, we cannot fail to protect the rights of children affected by armed conflict. By doing so, we will be helping to ensure that today's victim does not become tomorrow's aggressor. We believe that the United Nations plays an essential role in preventing childhood from being victimized amid warfare and in guaranteeing a future in which children can be bearers of hope and confidence as they emerge from conflict situations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim Hyun Chong (Republic of Korea): First, allow me to commend the work of the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to end violations against children and to guarantee the exercise of their rights. My delegation would also like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for their dedication in addressing the plight of children in armed conflict.

The Republic of Korea appreciates the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757) as well as the presentation by Ms. Coomaraswamy on recent developments. We appreciate the achievements accomplished so far, yet continue to have grave concerns about the challenges that we still face. Achievements have been accomplished in areas such as the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in 11 countries since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

We are particularly pleased to note a number of significant developments related to ending impunity for crimes against children, particularly the recruitment of children in armed conflicts. These include, inter alia, the confirmation of charges by the International Criminal Court against the leader of an armed group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the arrest warrants issued by the Court for senior members of the Lord's Resistance Army.

Despite this progress, we remain greatly concerned about the continuing plight of children affected by armed conflict. Child recruitment is still an issue of grave concern. As the Security Council continues to call upon parties engaged in armed conflict to take firm and timely action to stop the enlistment of children, it must also address the lack of security in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons, which are known hotbeds for recruitment.

My delegation contends that dealing with persistent violators is an urgent issue that must be addressed. Through the Secretary-General's reports, 16 persistent perpetrators have been identified. What will the Security Council do with these offenders? The Security Council should take effective targeted measures against such perpetrators, including a ban on the export or supply of arms, a ban on military assistance, travel restrictions, freezing of assets and a restriction on the flow of financial resources. Otherwise, they will continue to violate and undermine the credibility of the Security Council.

The delegation of the Republic of Korea, like those of many other Member States, is disturbed by the deplorable situation of sexual violence and abuse against children in armed conflict. As the Secretary-General's report highlighted, children are targeted with various forms of sexual and gender-based violence during armed conflict, including rape. As many as 60 per cent of the victims of sexual violence in areas of conflict are children. Furthermore, in some trouble spots, sexual violence and rape have been deliberately employed for political and military purposes. Unless the Security Council and the international community respond strongly to these violations, such disturbing cases will continue.

In this context, we urge the Security Council to consider widening the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. We agree with the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report that equal weight be given to all categories of grave violations. These include not only the recruitment and use of children but also the other five grave violations: the killing and maiming of children, rape and sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access to children.

The Republic of Korea supports an incremental approach, extending the mechanism to include sexual violence as a trigger for listing a party in the annexes to the reports of the Secretary-General and establishing a monitoring and reporting mechanism in the country concerned. We urge the Security Council to take this issue seriously and to work on a draft resolution in that direction.

Ending impunity is a critical element for halting violations of all kinds. Impunity for parties engaged in armed conflict, as well as for individual perpetrators, should cease. In order for this to come about, the Security Council should refer those accused of systematic and persistent violations against children to the International Criminal Court.

Lastly, the delegation of the Republic of Korea would like to emphasize the need to strengthen the role of major actors and the coordination among them. The Special Representative should be given all the necessary support, assistance and cooperation in implementing her mandate. The role of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should be further bolstered to address measures such as recommending targeted action to the Security Council and monitoring its implementation.

The additional actors involved in addressing the issue of children in armed conflict are the peacekeeping operations and the political missions, specifically their child protection advisers. My delegation believes that their role is crucial not only for the effective implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, but also for the effective prevention of violations and for more comprehensive protection of children. In this regard, the Security Council and the Secretary-General should send a stern message to the head of each mission to assume strong leadership.

Overall, national Governments should, in the end, take responsibility in protecting their children. In this regard, technical and financial assistance should be provided for capacity-building, and Governments should fully cooperate with the Security Council in preparing and implementing these actions, including the establishment of a justice mechanism.

Coordination and coherence are another important element. In order to effectively address the complex issue of children in armed conflict, both ending violations and the recovery and reintegration process need full coordination by all relevant bodies, including the Security Council, the Office of the Secretary-General, the peacekeeping operations, political missions, humanitarian agencies such as UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs). At the field level, the participation and contribution of NGOs are especially critical. Therefore, more closely coordinated involvement of NGOs in implementing the monitoring and reporting mechanism is needed.

We hope that today's open discussion on children in armed conflict will pave the way for meaningful deliberation in the Security Council. We look forward to a strong presidential statement which will lead to a new resolution in the near future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is pleased to address the Council today under your presidency, the presidency of a very able representative of our brother country, Panama. We also welcome the presence here today of the Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Panama, Mr. Samuel Lewis-Navarro. This demonstrates Panama's commitment to the activities of the United Nations and in particular, those of the Security Council.

My delegation has high regard for the open debates of the Security Council. We feel this is a way for those of us who are not members to draw closer to this very important central organ of the United Nations. My delegation has stated previously that, unfortunately, meetings of this kind often coincide with very important activities requiring the presence my colleagues, the Permanent Representatives of Council members.

Looking around the Chamber now, see that, except for the Permanent Representative of Indonesia and you, Mr. President, there are no other Permanent Representatives of Council members here. Nor are there any Deputy Permanent Representatives. It is a shame that the Security Council should hold such meetings when members are so busy that they cannot be here to hear their peers. I, too, have a number of other activities on my agenda and so I will be asking my colleague, Uruguay's expert on the Third Committee, to present my country's statement. I bid you good afternoon, Sir.

Mrs. Pi (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Uruguay welcomes this open debate on children in armed conflict and welcomes all the efforts of the international community in this regard. My delegation particularly appreciates the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict, a mandate that Uruguay fully supports.

We take this opportunity again to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for her work and her commitment to broad-based and effective protection of children in a situation of particular vulnerability. Her substantive reports, undertaken in the context of broad consultation, not only allow us to appreciate the achievements, but also clearly show how much work remains to be done.

The figures cited in recent reports on the impact of armed conflict are particularly worrisome, and no region in the world is immune. We are stunned by the number of children killed in war zones; injured or suffer permanently disabling injuries; recruited as soldiers, in blatant violation of international human rights instruments and humanitarian law; and the thousands of children, girls in particular, who are subject to sexual exploitation. We are concerned by the ongoing illegal recruitment of children in conflict zones, many of whom are kidnapped from refugee camps; by the various forms of sexual violence suffered by children, with devastating and permanent repercussions for the victims; by the cases of children who are detained in contravention of international norms; by systematic and deliberate attacks on educational institutions; and by the impunity still enjoyed by the perpetrators of crimes against children.

Uruguay welcomes the fact that the issue of children affected by armed conflict is receiving increasing attention on the international agenda, as reflected in the many international instruments to which my country is a party. Much remains to be done, however. The subject is on the General Assembly's agenda, and every year my country plays a very active role in that regard with a view to strengthening and increasing the involvement and responsibility of a body of universal composition in a subject that falls within its purview and is of concern to us all.

Uruguay nonetheless recognizes the role that has been played by the Security Council, where progress has moved from talk to implementation through the adoption of numerous resolutions, the most recent of which created the monitoring and reporting mechanism with a view to ensuring that sound information is available and concrete action taken to end the illegal recruitment and exploitation of children in conflict zones.

Some two years after the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), establishing the monitoring and reporting mechanism, it is now time to assess not only its implementation, but also its format. We are thus concerned that, despite the reports received identifying six types of serious violations against children, the mechanism is applicable only to the recruitment and illegal use of child soldiers. We feel that that approach should be broadened, since no violation is more serious than another and all should be considered on an equal footing.

We appreciate the inclusive and broad-based nature of the mechanism, which works with the involvement of all parties to a conflict — Governments, non-governmental armed forces, the United Nations system and civil society, including non-governmental organizations. We believe that only through joint and coordinated endeavours, the strengthening of the rules of international law and the utilization of available judicial mechanisms — the International Criminal Court in particular — will it be possible to develop and implement plans of action allowing us to put an end to the serious violations that children continue to endure in armed conflict.

We welcome the joint work done by civil society with the United Nations system as a whole, including the peacekeeping missions, in building lasting child protection mechanisms. We believe that the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in peacekeeping missions, as well as the inclusion by UNICEF of child protection advisers in such missions — in which Uruguay has been deeply involved — should be stepped up and receive sufficient human, financial and technical support.

My delegation feels that greater attention should be paid to the rehabilitation of children linked to armed groups or that have been the victims of other serious violations of their rights, particularly in cases of sexual abuse or exploitation. We agree with the Special Representative that the efforts made in the initial planning and implementation of peacekeeping operations should take into account the need to protect and rehabilitate children, and that such action should be community-based so as to facilitate the sustainable and successful reintegration of children.

Child protection is a commitment on the part of us all. We hope in that regard that all States, together with the United Nations system and organized civil society, including children themselves, can undertake joint action that will allow us to achieve a world of peace for all in which we can truly protect the rights and well-being of children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Argüello (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina would like to start by thanking the Panamanian presidency of the Security Council for the month of February for organizing this debate, which ratifies the political decision of this Council to put an end to the suffering of children affected by armed conflict.

We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann Veneman, for their comprehensive presentations on this complex issue, as well as Ms. Jo Becker from Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers for the information she has shared with us.

More than two years since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), we welcome the progress made in the protection of children affected by armed conflict through the joint action of States and the mechanisms created by the United Nations system, with the invaluable contribution of civil society. We must commend the actions taken by some national Governments to put an end to crimes committed against children in armed conflict and to bring perpetrators to justice. We must also highlight the activities of civil society in gathering information on the situation of children in territories affected by armed conflict and in denouncing the abuses to which children are subject. It is indispensable to guarantee their safety, as well as that of the victims and their families, when denouncing such acts in order to guarantee the proper functioning of the justice system and avoid impunity.

Argentina places the highest importance in the promotion and protection of the rights of girls and boys, both in its national plans and strategies centred on the family as the basic unit of society, as well as through its ongoing support for and participation in all international initiatives aimed at ensuring the opportunity for all children to enjoy a childhood effectively free from violence.

In that regard, we note that, in spite of the progress made, it is necessary to strengthen the measures for the protection of children affected by armed conflict in the framework of an integral approach that cannot be limited to the security aspects and must include political, juridical and socio-economic measures.

Regarding the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) of the Security Council and the functioning of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Argentina believes that progress is needed with regard to the following.

First, the Security Council must reiterate the clear message to all responsible parties that the international community will not tolerate any further violation of the rights of children in conflict. We are persuaded that the presidential statement to be adopted by the Council at the end of this debate will serve that purpose.

Secondly, it is necessary to deepen the political and financial commitment of Member States in support of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and to keep it operational in all situations of armed conflict.

Thirdly, it is imperative to achieve the full implementation of all monitoring and reporting mechanisms on children affected by armed conflict of the Working Group, as provided for in resolution 1612 (2005).

Fourthly, the Security Council must incorporate into the mandate of the Working Group those situations where may arise any of the six categories of grave violations: the recruitment and use of child soldiers, rape and other grave sexual violence, the killing and maiming of children, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access to children.

Fifthly, we have confirmed the valuable contribution that the presence of child protection advisers can make in terms of obtaining timely and precise information that allows for the prompt undertaking of promotion activities and a rapid response to diverse situations in order to protect children affected by armed conflict, as well as contributing to their prevention. Thus, it is necessary to consider their incorporation into the mandates of all relevant future peacekeeping missions and political missions.

Sixthly, it is necessary to strengthen disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes so that victims have a real opportunity to rejoin society with sufficient funding and practical efficient mechanisms that produce sustainable results in the long term.

Combating impunity and finding justice are at the heart of any effective response to prevent and end violations of human rights in any situation. In that regard, we believe it is essential to explore all means of bringing perpetrators to justice. That includes the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court in appropriate cases.

Violations of the rights of children in situations of conflict not only affect peace and security, they also have dire consequences for the present and future development of affected societies. The heightened vulnerability of those children makes them easy targets when it comes to increasing the number combatants, as well as regards forced labour and sexual exploitation. The exploitation of children, either in an armed conflict or in any other situation is unspeakable, inexcusable and an affront that goes to the very heart of the common values that all our societies share.

Argentina therefore reiterates its ongoing commitment to the protection of children from all forms of violence. We also reiterate our readiness to continue to cooperate with the Working Group chaired by the delegation of France, as we did from 2005 to 2006 as an elected member of the Council and as we reiterated recently through the submission of our 2007 national report and our support for the adoption of concrete steps towards improving the life of children who are being affected daily by the consequences of conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Briz Gutiérrez (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to thank the Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Panama for his presence at our meeting this morning, to which we have come to debate this issue. We also welcome the presence of several ministers of State, as well as the briefings by Ms. Coomaraswamy and Ms. Veneman, the valuable contribution of Ms. Jo Becker of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict and the information provided by the organization Security Council Report.

A little over 10 years ago, Graça Machel's report (A/51/306) highlighted to the Organization the horrors suffered by children affected by armed conflict. That led to the holding of the Security Council's first open debate on children and armed conflict. In June 2008, 10 years will have passed since that event. We regret how many young lives have been lost or tragically and violently affected, especially as regards girls. Unfortunately, since then we have also witnessed the changes that have taken place in war tactics and the nature of conflicts, wherein civilian populations have increasingly become the targets of violence and unspeakable atrocities, leading to a new spiral of violence and further threats to children.

In spite of so many atrocities, which have all caused irreversible damage to children, Guatemala recognizes that some progress was made in that time. For example, this subject has been regularly discussed in 11 open debates, and resolutions have been adopted that refer specifically to the situation of children in armed conflict — including resolution 1612 (2005), which set out the conceptual framework to strengthen the protection of children who are victims of armed conflict and to combat the recruitment and use of children as soldiers by armed forces or groups of any sort. It is clear that of the six grave violations identified throughout the years, the recruitment and use of children has garnered the greatest attention. In addition, more recently, child protection advisers have been included in peacekeeping and special political operations. It is now up to us to continue to move ahead to address the very widespread phenomenon of gender-based violence, including the systematic rape of girls, sexual slavery and the brutal violence to which they are subjected and their ensuing stigmatization by their communities.

We must also not fail to increasingly address other forms of violence that also affect children: mutilation, murder, kidnapping and attacks against school and hospitals. Such violence forces children to flee their families and communities, forcing them to become refugees in neighbouring towns and countries. Without a doubt, that makes them even more vulnerable. Worse yet is a phenomenon that has been documented in several conflicts, namely, the denial of the very humanitarian assistance that goes some way towards ameliorating the problems of children affected by armed conflict.

The responsibility to protect children in armed conflict is incumbent upon us all. However, there is no doubt that this is the primary responsibility of States. Civil society can be a country's best ally — gathering information on examples or cases of violence against children and sharing that information with the relevant Government officials responsible for corroborating it and taking the appropriate steps. The role of civil society can also be very important as regards working with Governments to implement a monitoring and reporting mechanism, mediation efforts to secure the release of children in the hands or combatants and rescuing children from military organizations. Civil society also has a role to play in the rehabilitation and social reintegration of children and in designing and implementing reconciliation processes aimed at repairing the social fabric.

If they do not receive appropriate assistance, as adults, children who have grown up in a climate of violence, have suffered from violence or have been forced to engage in it are likely to repeat that behaviour. In that connection, we should also recall the importance of fully adhering to and implementing international principles, norms and procedures of restorative justice and social rehabilitation when it comes to addressing cases of children accused of committing crimes in association with armed groups or forces.

That reference to justice leads me to the annexes published by the Secretary-General in his reports, which identify groups that recruit children and on which, year after year, several groups are listed that we already know to be habitual violators of the rights of children. In that connection, there is a need to put an end to impunity. Guatemala concurs with the Secretary-General that those groups should be subjected to much more robust and effective targeted sanctions. There should also be closer controls over the sale and availability of weapons and over capital flows intended for weapons. Eliminating such groups should be a resolute and urgent priority for the Security Council.

Given the sensitive nature of the issue before us today, it is important that any information coming into the United Nations system, the Office of the Special Representative, the Security Council and any other body of the Organization should be objective, reliable and from responsible interlocutors. From the community level to national and international institutions, communication, cooperation, coordination, information exchange and verification, and transparency among all parties and actors should be carried out in line with the relevant mandates and working methods.

In conclusion, Guatemala recognizes and is grateful for the valuable contributions made by the Paris Principles and Guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups. They provide us with a comprehensive picture of the experiences and lessons learned in the course of the past 10 years. We also appreciate the so-called toolkit developed by the Council's Working Group. We believe its work should be decisively utilized.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your very able stewardship of the Council this month and thank you for convening this important meeting. My delegation also wishes to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, the UNICEF Executive Director, Ms. Veneman, and the representative of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict for their statements and their important work on behalf of children everywhere.

In addition, my delegation commends the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts, under the able stewardship of France, for its work on the promotion and protection of children affected by armed conflict.

At the outset, allow me a personal note. When I presented my credentials to Secretary-General Kofi Annan just over five years ago, on 6 January 2003, I said to him that I was doing so on behalf of a nation, a people and a child. When I said the word "child", I saw him tense, and then I said that the nation was the State of Israel, which I love very much, the people are the Jewish people, who I am very proud to represent, and the child was my four-year-old grandchild, Ron, who at the time was attending a kindergarten in Tel Aviv. Every time I went to pick him up from the kindergarten, my heart broke at the sight of the armed guard standing outside those innocent kids' kindergarten to protect them from terror. I told the Secretary-General that Israel was the only democracy in the world where nurseries, kindergartens and schools are protected by armed guards, and I voiced my hope and prayer that by the end of my tenure here, no child in the world would have to be guarded by armed guards. Unfortunately, today, more than five years later, my grandson is nine years old and attending a school in Israel that is still guarded by armed guards.

Over the past two decades, more than 2 million children have been killed in conflicts, with another 6 million maimed or permanently injured. More than a quarter of a million youths have been exploited as child soldiers, and, needless to say, most are recruited at such a young age that they are robbed of their schooling and youth. Thousands of girls have been subject to sexual exploitation, prostitution, rape — which is even used as a weapon of war — and sexual and gender-based violence.

Accordingly, Israel assigns great importance to the protection of children, particularly from violence and armed conflict. Israel has been a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1991 and to its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. Last year, Israel was pleased to welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, for a visit and to cooperate with and support her as she sought to better understand the impact of conflict on all the children of our region.

In that regard, my delegation takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, (S/2007/757) and wishes to briefly highlight and expand on some of the issues it references.

Armed conflict levies a heavy toll on all civilian populations, and no effort must be spared to ensure the protection of civilians, particularly children, whose inherent vulnerabilities make them dependent on others for safety. The spread of terrorism around the globe means that civilians today are especially and increasingly placed in danger, from both indiscriminate and targeted terrorist attacks.

There can be no doubt that terrorism comes at civilians' expense. Even worse, children have often become the object of such terrorist interest for purposes of recruitment, incitement to violence, human shielding and even targeted attacks. While terrorism is a global concern, the situation in our region provides a stark snapshot of some of the most daunting challenges the international community faces in the protection of children.

Extremist ideology is the handmaiden of youth violence. Young people are extremely impressionable, susceptible to brainwashing and indoctrination by icons of popularity. Often enough, official textbooks used in schools teach children hatred and incite them to violence. Indeed, indoctrination is just as dangerous as the acts of violence and terrorism themselves, as they pervert the value and worth of education, poison the social bloodstream and create an infrastructure for continued terrorism and extremism.

As one example, a recent episode of the Hamas television show "Tomorrow's Pioneers" featured a malevolent rabbit that eats Jews. Numerous other television programmes, all viewed by thousands upon thousands of Palestinian children, are known to praise jihad and violence and indoctrinate that young viewership.

Palestinian terrorists use similar tactics to actively recruit children to carry out terrorist operations. Then there are the cases of parents, mothers and fathers, who strap suicide belts on their own children and send them off to carry out terrorist attacks and those who dance on the rooftops celebrating the carnage they caused by firing Qassam rockets and injuring Israeli children. Those grotesque images shake us all to the very core, but they are also a very real aspect of the way that children are threatened and harmed by Palestinian terrorism.

Moreover, the use of civilian areas to carry out acts of terrorism is being seen with alarming frequency. On 29 October 2007, Hamas terrorists in the Gaza Strip fired mortars from the yard of a United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) elementary school in Beit Hanoun. That cynical abuse of the school and violation of a United Nations installation for terrorist purposes was rightfully condemned by the Secretary-General. Regrettably, the incident is absent from the aforementioned report.

Similarly, while the report provides statistical data on the number of Israeli children physically injured by Qassam rockets, the report fails to reflect on the long-term damage, such as psychological conditions and stress disorders that are the direct consequence of the rocket barrages fired by Palestinian terrorists.

That indiscriminate rocket firing poses a particular danger to children. A case in point is the city of Sderot, where up to 94 per cent of children suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, including sleep and concentration problems and even bed-wetting. The psychological effects are no less damaging than physical wounds and should not be casually dismissed. Indeed, the frequency of rocket attacks has increased alarmingly in recent months, where, on average, one rocket is fired at Israel every three hours.

The rockets, sadly, inflict devastating physical suffering as well. Over the past weekend, two brothers were seriously wounded when a Qassam rocket slammed into their hometown of Sderot. On Sunday evening, doctors were forced to amputate part of the left leg of one of the boys, eight-year-old Osher Tuito. In Hebrew, by the way, "Osher" means joy and happiness. His 19-year-old brother Rami was also badly injured from the terrorist attack. Osher, who dreamed of becoming a soccer player, does not yet know that he has lost one of his legs.

Israelis were reminded of the never-ending and inescapable pain of Palestinian terrorism when the Tuito family received a letter yesterday from the Cohen family, whose children, Tehila and Yisrael, ages seven and eight, also had their legs amputated after being severely injured in a terrorist attack a few years ago. In their letter, the Cohen children wrote to the Tuitos:

> "What can we say to you as Osher lies in the hospital bed without knowing what the future holds? It is heartbreaking. Such a small child. And the biggest question is — will he ever be able to ride a bike again or kick a soccer ball? You deserve the security of living in your own home and your own town, living with the other citizens who live there".

That is a touching statement of courage and solidarity in the face of terrorism, but it is also a harrowing reminder of how Palestinian terrorism continues to destroy and shatter innocent lives.

Surely, there is no monopoly on suffering. All children — Palestinian and Israeli — suffer from and are victims of this Palestinian terror. Terrorism is a gross threat to the ability of our children to live in peace and safety in the region. Hence, terrorism, in all its varieties and forms, is always unacceptable and can never be justified — because it is the children who ultimately suffer, each and every one of them. The child victims of terrorism, both Israeli and Palestinian, are real. Each one has a name and a family; each one has his or her own dreams and aspirations. And each victim has now had those dreams and hopes shattered by the cruelty and inhumanity of terrorism.

Lastly, my delegation wishes to place on record its concern regarding some of the methodologies utilized in compiling the report. Specifically, our concerns relate to sections where ambiguities in the report may allow for misinterpretation. Moreover, the tendency to rely on unsubstantiated reports, third-party testimony and hearsay harms the report's credibility and effectiveness. We stress that accurate reporting is in the interest of regional peace and security and that all efforts should be made to utilize credible testimonials and evidence. My delegation is engaged in active dialogue and cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and we hope to see these concerns reflected in future reports.

As Israel engages with the moderate Palestinian Authority leadership and works shoulder to shoulder to achieve peace and security for all citizens of our region, we are aware of the impact that conflict has had on our children. It is in this interest, therefore, that Israel hopes to prepare its children for peace, to maintain a commitment to dialogue and moderation and to eradicate extremism, racism and hate. Only upon those foundations will we truly be able to build a better world today for our children and grandchildren of tomorrow.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): I would like to thank the delegation of Panama for convening today's important meeting. We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her impressive and compelling statement today and for the excellent work she has done since taking office two years ago. We would also like to thank Ms. Ann Veneman, the Executive Director of UNICEF, whose statement today illustrates the importance of UNICEF for the issue of children and armed conflict. We also welcome to this debate Ms. Jo Becker from Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, an organization whose rigorous and important work is supported by Canada.

Today's debate is an opportunity once again to bring to the attention of the Council the severity of acts of violence against children in violation of human rights and international humanitarian law. The Security Council has a central role to play in protecting children who suffer from the horrific effects of armed conflict and in holding accountable those responsible for the continuing atrocities committed against them. The Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict is an important tool to understand how violations against children constitute a threat to international peace and security. The report (S/2007/757) outlines clear recommendations for future action.

Canada strongly supports and wishes to speak to three areas in particular: first, the need for the Security Council to give equal attention to children affected by armed conflict, whether in situations on the agenda of the Council or not; secondly, the necessity to give equal weight to all categories of grave violations described in the report, beyond simply the recruitment and use of children; and finally, the need to implement the monitoring and reporting mechanism within the framework of resolution 1612 (2005) in all situations of concern.

In July 2005, the Council adopted resolution 1612 (2005), which has proven to be an effective tool for putting pressure on those who commit violations against children. Canada commends the work of the Security Council Working Group created by resolution 1612 (2005) and the strong support provided by the Secretariat to the Working Group. It is also important to underline the tremendous work in the field that has been accomplished by UNICEF and by the various non-governmental organizations and civil society actors that contribute to the 1612 (2005) monitoring and reporting mechanism. The work of all United Nations personnel in the field, whether in peace missions or in United Nations country teams, is instrumental in making child protection a reality on the ground. Without this joint effort, the impact of resolution 1612 (2005) would fail to reach the children in need.

Addressing the situation of children and armed conflict can be difficult. The Secretary-General's report shows this all too well. The protection framework created by resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) is a complex web of instruments that can lead to concrete actions to end violations, but only with the cooperation of Member States. Those who criticize the complexity of these instruments should not forget the important successes that have been achieved. For example, the de-listing of parties to the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire is a significant achievement of the resolution 1612 (2005) framework and offers lessons for future success. We also note with satisfaction some progress in various situations outlined in the report of the Secretary-General which are clearly linked to the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005).

While Canada is generally satisfied with the current state of implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), there remain clear gaps. Several parties that persistently commit grave violations against children in conflict situations remain untouched by the resolution. This cannot continue. In order to end this culture of impunity, it is essential that the Council apply targeted measures against these violators and work on their referral to the relevant tribunals. In this regard, Canada is pleased by the charges, trials and sentences over the past year by the International Criminal Court and the Special Court for Sierra Leone for crimes against children. We urge the Working Group to continue its efforts and we urge the Council to use this route while also pursuing targeted measures through the specific country mandates.

(*spoke in French*)

We think the time is right for the Council to strengthen its protection framework for children, particularly by allowing the existing resolution 1612 (2005) monitoring and reporting mechanism to be triggered by all violations against children described by the Secretary-General in his report. Specifically, rape and other grave sexual violations must be addressed. While we welcome the cooperation of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), the appalling situation in that country demonstrates why this type of violation has been deemed a threat to international peace and security.

Moreover, Canada believes that the Council should adopt a new resolution to expand monitoring and reporting, including strengthening the relevant work of the Security Council Working Group, in order to eradicate these heinous crimes committed against children. These measures should be undertaken as soon as possible.

At the end of the day, what matters is real and visible protection for children. Furthermore, that consideration underpins our support for strengthening the framework of protection provided for in resolution 1612 (2005). In particular, we must eliminate sexual violence in conflicts and make progress towards the fulfilment of an ideal: freeing children from the shackles of war. We all know that, if we are to improve their living conditions, all efforts count, in all fields and in all places, from war zones to the halls of academia to United Nations conference rooms in New York.

Finally, Canada believes that the Security Council is on the right track in addressing this issue, thanks in particular to France's leadership of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts. We are convinced that the Council will continue to do its part, including through its excellent work in this area.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Austria.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): Austria fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union. We would like to make some additional comments.

We highly commend the Panamanian presidency for holding this open debate on children and armed conflict. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2007/757) and welcome his recommendations.

As all speakers have stated, children are among the most vulnerable groups in our societies. They are the easiest prey for ruthless perpetrators; they are also the key to the future of our societies. The way in which children are treated in conflicts has fundamental implications for society and for our self-conception as human beings. We must therefore put an end to the acts of those groups and individuals who systematically and deliberately target and abuse children in situations of armed conflict.

We highly appreciate the outstanding work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. Her efforts have made a real difference for children on the ground. We also support the important UNICEF initiatives to, inter alia, follow up on the Paris Principles and Commitments.

The crucial role of non-governmental organizations must also be highlighted. They are on the front lines in supporting children and make a very special contribution to the success of the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

We now have a comprehensive set of instruments, including Security Council resolutions, prohibiting and criminalizing the recruitment and use of child soldiers as well as other abuses of children in armed conflict. The Security Council has been actively engaged in addressing violations against children, in particular through the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005) and the creation of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts, which, under France's leadership, has greatly enhanced the Council's efforts.

However, despite all our efforts, there still is a long list of perpetrators who for years have continued to systematically commit serious violations against children and have gone unpunished. That situation demands further action by the Security Council. Unfortunately, some of the existing mechanisms and tools of the Council and of the Working Group have been underutilized. We support the Secretary-General's call for making full use of the available range of measures in these cases, including the imposition of targeted measures and the referral of violations against children in armed conflict to the International Criminal Court for investigation and prosecution. We also call on Member States to strengthen the rule of law and to fully utilize judicial mechanisms to bring to justice perpetrators of violations against children.

We support the Secretary-General's recommendation that equal weight be given to all categories of grave violations against children. A phased approach could be taken to make that recommendation a reality. As a first step, the crime of rape and grave sexual violence against children could be added as an alternative gateway to trigger the monitoring and reporting mechanism. Like the recruitment of child soldiers, these crimes are intentional acts. Parties to armed conflict can reasonably be expected to take action against perpetrators. Progress in the implementation of action plans can be measured.

We are deeply shocked by the appalling level of sexual and gender-based violence against children, as documented in the Secretary-General's report. As has been pointed out by all previous speakers, these acts are horrendous crimes, and those responsible for committing them must be brought to justice. For that reason, Austria has increased its support for campaigns against sexual violence and assistance programmes for victims of such violence, in particular in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Children and armed conflict has been an issue of critical importance and great concern for Austria for many years. We have made the protection of children in armed conflict a priority in our foreign and development policy and will continue to do so in the future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I congratulate you, Sir, and your country, Panama, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and express our confidence in your ability to wisely guide the work of the Council. I also reiterate our thanks to the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for its able leadership of the Council in January. In addition, I thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Ms. Ann Veneman and Ms. Jo Becker for their statements.

Armed conflicts continue to claim the lives of innocent children around the world. Our world is not one fit for all children, particularly those in situations of armed conflict, who are surrounded by dangers that force them to live in constant fear for their lives and leave them needy and vulnerable. Their childhoods are marred by violence, physical and psychological harm; displacement; imprisonment; exploitation, including recruitment as soldiers and sexual exploitation; hunger; poverty; lack of education; and devastation of their families and communities.

For children in situations of armed conflict, including foreign occupation, all aspects of life are detrimentally impacted and the meaning of childhood is lost. As stated in the important Graça Machel study "Impact of armed conflict on children",

> "War violates every right of a child — the right to life, the right to be with family and community, the right to health, the right to ... development ... and the right to be nurtured and protected".

Moreover, the damage caused to children today has negative short and long-term consequences for children, women, families and societies as a whole, inevitably impacting future prospects for peace and development in our world. We know that to be true. Yet, regrettably, children continue to be the victims of appalling human rights violations and crimes, despite the international community's Declaration, more than five years ago, that

> "Children must be protected from the horrors of armed conflict. Children under foreign occupation must also be protected, in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law". (*General Assembly resolution S-27/2, para. 7 (7), annex*)

We must act now, in reaffirmation of this commitment, to protect children and to ensure their rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all other relevant international legal instruments.

The wide gap between such international legal standards and their actual implementation for safeguarding children's rights must be closed. Ending impunity for violations against children is paramount, and we agree in this regard with the recommendations in the 10-year strategic review of the Machel report, including the application of targeted measures such as sanctions against those persistently committing grave violations against children in armed conflict.

Decades of human rights violations and hardships have indelibly marked Palestine's children and refugees and those under occupation, resulting in what the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, described in a report following her visit to the occupied Palestinian territory in April 2007, as "a palpable sense of loss and a feeling of hopelessness that places the children of the West Bank and Gaza apart from all other situations the SRSG has visited to date".

Palestinian children continue to be killed and wounded in Israeli military assaults and to be traumatized by the vicious cycle of violence, with nearly 1,000 children killed since September 2000 and more than 3,500 injured, many of them permanently disabled.

Children continue to be used as human shields by the occupying forces, and their schools continue to be targeted by attacks. More than 400 Palestinian children, some as young as 12 years old, also continue to be imprisoned by Israel under inhumane conditions and subject to physical and mental ill-treatment, including torture and threats of sexual violence. Palestinian children also continue to suffer displacement and its many associated consequences, including induced poverty, as a result of the occupying Power's wanton destruction of homes and refugee shelters and unlawful construction of the wall and settlements.

Palestinian children also continue to suffer gravely from the deliberate denial of humanitarian access by the occupying Power. Israel's collective punishment of the Palestinian people has disastrously impacted the humanitarian situation of children, with the situation in the besieged Gaza Strip most severe. There, Israel's obstruction of access for humanitarian supplies and personnel is violating children's rights to food, health care, education and, in some cases, the right to life itself.

It has been reported that already more than 67 children have died due to blockage of access to proper medical care, including prevention of treatment outside the Gaza Strip and a shortage of 150 critical medications. In conjunction with this, widespread hunger in Gaza, where mothers and fathers cannot even feed their children without food aid, and the severe shortages of fresh drinking water have caused a dramatic decline in health, with rampant child malnutrition, anaemia, and stunted growth. Medical research estimates that at least 70 per cent of children in Gaza are anaemic and that, consequently, these children lack immunity even to common childhood diseases, not to mention other, more virulent diseases. In such a situation, even a simple outbreak of influenza could cause severe illness or widespread death among children. Such a catastrophe must be averted by immediate humanitarian and political intervention.

While it is our deepest hope that current peace efforts will lead to a just and lasting settlement that will bring to Palestinian children the freedom, security and well-being of peace in their independent State, living side by side with Israeli children in peace and security, reiterate that the rights of children living in such situations of armed conflict, including foreign occupation, and response to their needs cannot be postponed or withheld. For all of these children, there must be collective efforts to ensure their protection and their rights as well as the necessary assistance and rehabilitation to give them hope and allow them to become productive members of their societies, contributing to the advancement of their nations.

In this regard, we agree with the recommendation in the report of the Secretary-General that child protection advisers should be posted in the occupied Palestinian territory, among other places, to enhance human rights monitoring and appropriate responses to children's issues.

Moreover, we stress the central role of the United Nation in assisting and protecting children, particularly through the important work of UNICEF and, in the case of Palestinian children, of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East as well, and the many other United Nations agencies working with other international humanitarian organizations to help children around the world. Such efforts, combined with the important advocacy work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, will keep attention on the plight of children in armed conflict, a plight that the Security Council must also address as it endeavours to address armed conflicts in their entirety for the promotion of peace and security for all in our world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal.

Mr. Acharya (Nepal) (*spoke in English*): First of all, Mr. President, I wish to thank you very much for organizing this open debate on the important issue of children and armed conflict.

On behalf of the delegation of Nepal, I would like to welcome the report of the Secretary General of 21 December 2007 (S/2007/757), including the comments on progress in the implementation of various Council resolutions on the subject. We especially appreciate the presentations on the subject by the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann Veneman.

My delegation feels that the Council, through its resolutions, including resolution 1612 (2005), has contributed immensely to improving the plight of children in armed conflicts in various parts of the world. Since the question of children in armed conflict is undoubtedly one that cuts across a number of complex social, cultural, economic and legal issues, it requires simultaneous actions on multiple fronts.

Recruitment of children in armed conflicts continues to be the issue of overarching concern. Needless to say, a successful reintegration of children recruited in armed conflicts is a key to finding a lasting solution in any situation involving children and armed conflict.

As mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, the sexual abuse and exploitation of children during armed conflicts is an issue of a serious concern. Impunity on such heinous crimes should not be tolerated. We welcome the recommendation that the Council give the same importance to all categories of grave violations, including rape and sexual violence as well as abductions of children in all situations, as it does to the recruitment of children in armed groups.

Allow me to make a few points with regard to the section in the report on children affected by armed conflict in Nepal. Nepal has attached high priority to protecting and promoting the rights of the children who have been victims of armed conflict.

In accordance with the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the process of verification of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) combatants now living in cantonments has been completed and children under the age of 18 have been identified. At the moment, we are working with the United Nations Mission in Nepal, UNICEF and relevant United Nations agencies in developing modalities with regard to releasing and rehabilitating the minors from the cantonments, as provided for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. In that regard, we particularly welcome the recommendation that the United Nations agencies, donors and partners should provide adequate support to national Governments in the rehabilitation and reintegration of children affected by armed conflicts.

We are confident that the election to the Constituent Assembly, to be held on 10 April, will pave the way for a better future for children affected by the decade-long conflict in Nepal. The Government of Nepal is committed to preventing children and youth from being part of any violent activities and is also determined to end impunity for crimes committed against them under any pretext. We believe that the establishment of the truth and reconciliation commission, which is under active consideration, will also address that issue. As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol, Nepal is committed to taking measures to enact and implement the provisions of those instruments.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict for the important work it has one under the chairmanship of the Permanent Representative of France. The Government of Nepal is committed to implementing various recommendations of the Working Group adopted on 12 June last year, especially in the context of the ongoing peace process. Let me also take this opportunity to inform the Council that the Government of Nepal looks forward to seriously engaging in discussions during the proposed visit to Nepal later this month of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, on various protection measures for children affected by the conflict.

In closing, let me reiterate that Nepal is steadfast in fulfilling its responsibilities in providing effective protection and promoting the rights of children affected by armed conflict, and in that regard is ready to extend full cooperation to the monitoring and reporting mechanism established under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Uganda.

Mr. Lukwiya (Uganda): I would like to thank the Security Council for allowing my delegation to participate in this debate on the important issue of children and armed conflict. My delegation has carefully studied and noted the seventh report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, contained in document S/2007/757.

My delegation wishes to address itself specifically to paragraphs 133, 134 and 135 of the report, as well as to annex II of the report, in which, once again, references are made to the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), as well as to the now-defunct local defence units, as parties that have also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.

It has been reported that, due to the lack of effective monitoring at the local level, children have continued to join the armed forces. We would like to state that Uganda has evolved a very effective mechanism to monitor recruitment into the armed forces. The mechanism starts at the village level, with the village chairman or head testifying to the character, education and age of the potential recruit. A medical examination is undertaken by a fully qualified medical officer at the recruitment centre to verify both the age and the medical condition of the applicant. Any recruit found to be below the age of 18 years and medically unfit is discharged. He or she is not allowed into the forces. We are, however, cognizant of the fact that no mechanism or system can be perfect. Uganda is, however, determined to ensure that the system works and does not allow children to join the armed forces, contrary to the law and constitution of the land.

It has been stated that, during the reporting period, 16 cases of recruitment and use of children aged between 14 and 17 were detected. As a percentage of the total force throughout the country, that is a very small fraction, considering that some cases do slip through the system. However, all efforts are made to avoid that happening at all. Uganda handles such cases appropriately through immediate demobilization and sanctions against those individuals that assisted in the violation. Demobilization and reintegration in such circumstances are immediate. In that endeavour, we work with UNICEF and civil society organizations. The Government has built a large boarding primary school in Gulu to facilitate the process. It affords demobilized children an orderly return to normal civilian life.

It has never been the official policy of the military to occupy schools or any other educational or social institutions. However, in a few isolated cases, the conflict situation has led the army to occupy some school structures abandoned by the general population and students. Schools were constructed near camps for the internally displaced to service children in the vicinity. Structures of the former Baralegi primary school in Okwang sub-county are currently occupied by the army, as stated in the report. However, at the time of initial occupation, it had been abandoned and was in a state of disrepair; now, with the return of peace to the area, many people are moving back. There is a population that needs to have the school. Due to the serious damage that they underwent, it is no longer possible to use the same structures. New structures have been constructed and others are under construction. Those form the new school. The community is therefore not deprived of educational services, as the report seems to suggest.

With regard to the agreed action plan for the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers, which was finalized in August 2007, I would like to inform the Council that, on 2 November 2007, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as the Chairman of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, were furnished with a matrix from my Government showing its achievements as of August 2007, together with the agreed terms of reference for the Uganda task force for monitoring and reporting, which is headed by UNICEF. In doing so, we believed that we, as a Government, were exercising maximum cooperation with the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as with all partners in the cause. We are therefore disappointed as a Government to learn that our dedication to the implementation of the same action plan is being put into question.

The report alleges that there are children within the ranks of the local defence units. Uganda wishes to state that those units have been disbanded. Some of the personnel have been integrated into the national army and the police. Recruits were diligently vetted for qualifications, which included, among other things, successful completion of four years of secondary school education, a minimum age of 18 years, and medical fitness. That is not a claim, as the Secretary-General's report states in paragraph 133; it is a statement of fact. It therefore follows that all cases reported about the presence of children in local defence units are non-existent, since the institution has been dissolved. It no longer exists. Furthermore, as a non-existent entity, it should no longer be listed under annex II.

Rape is a capital offence under both military and civil Ugandan law. It is punishable by death if guilt is proven. Moreover, reported cases of rape are always investigated and tried accordingly. The UPDF Act prescribes the death sentence for rape if the accused is found guilty by an appropriate military tribunal. Individual soldiers who have raped and been tried and found guilty have had to face the death penalty.

Regarding rape and sexual offences committed by people in internally displaced persons camps, we wish to state that those are civilian cases, which should be tried by civilian courts. In some cases, no conclusive action has been taken for the following reasons: first, problems regarding investigative institutional capacity as a result of the 20 years of insurgency, which has disrupted institutions, including the police and the judiciary; secondly, unwillingness of witnesses to speak out due to cultural inhibitions and fear of retribution from fellow internally displaced persons, given the severity of the punishment for the offender; thirdly, failure of victims to cooperate with police investigators due to fear of social stigma.

It is also alleged in the report that "children who had escaped from [the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)] were used for gathering intelligence before being released in February 2007" (S/2007/757, para. 133). Uganda wishes to state that whenever children are rescued from the LRA, the Government forces undertake a normal debriefing exercise. The exercise is meant first and foremost to help establish the children's areas of origin, education levels and age. That assists the army officers in referring the children to the relevant locations and organizations for psycho-social rehabilitation. In some cases, however, those children have information of military value, including the location of LRA arms caches. In such situations, they can help the army recover hidden arms, thus reducing the capacity of the LRA to wage war. They are immediately released upon the completion of any arms recovery exercise. It is not the policy of the Government or the UPDF to use children to gather intelligence. What happens in that case is the careful extraction by the UPDF of any actionable intelligence information that the children have at the time of reporting or rescue. They are not used to gather intelligence, as reported in the report of the Secretary-General.

It is also our view that Uganda should be de-linked from the LRA, as the LRA is no longer operating in Uganda. The international community, and the Security Council in particular, should exert maximum pressure on the LRA to release all women and children within its ranks and in captivity.

Allow me to conclude by stating the view of the Government of Uganda that the UPDF entry should be removed from annex II of the report, given the circumstances under which it was put there and the measures we have taken to ensure that underage people are not recruited into our armed forces. We find it a little irritating for Uganda to be called upon year after year to explain a situation that is no longer the case, as if we were a guilty party. If this unjustified trend continues, we know that it will only harm our cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We would not like that to happen.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka): Mr. President, allow me to first congratulate you on your able stewardship of the Security Council this month. At the outset, allow me to convey my sincere appreciation to you and the members of the Council for convening this meeting, which provides an opportunity to focus our attention on the use of children in armed conflict.

This debate takes place in tandem with the 10-year review of the Graça Machel report, which brought this issue to the fore. It is therefore time to take stock of action taken thus far by the international community to address the detestable practice of the use of children for violent purposes in conflict situations. We recognize the role of the Secretary-General and the contribution of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, to this cause, which we believe can be more focused and results-oriented.

As Sri Lanka celebrates the 60th anniversary of our independence this month, we take pride in the remarkable strides we have made in the social sector, especially in health care and education. For the past 60 years, Sri Lanka has invested heavily in children. Free compulsory primary education leading towards free university education, and free health care have been the hallmarks of our efforts. We are determined that our children continue to reap the benefits of those measures. We do not want our children to succumb to the diabolical efforts of non-State actors who use our innocent children for violent purposes.

Recognizing the need to safeguard our children from non-State actors who recruit children as agents of violence and terrorism, the Government has unveiled specific measures to strengthen the existing regime of protection of children and child welfare in its blueprint for peace and development for the country.

We are conscious that the primary responsibility for the protection of children and promotion of their welfare lies with the State, and that it is imperative for the State to ensure that children are not in danger and to prevent them from being used as accessories for violence. Therefore, just as we reject terrorism, we also continue to reject the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict as unjustifiable under all circumstances. We seek the support of the international community to eradicate this menace and urge stronger international measures against those who perpetrate such crimes.

In that context, the Government of Sri Lanka reiterates its long-held policy of zero tolerance towards the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. The Government believes strongly in addressing issues of children and armed conflict pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005). In that context, we reiterate our view that the Security Council must consider this issue on the basis of supporting the establishment of security and consolidating peace in conflict-afflicted societies, to enable States to protect their children from non-State actors who violate children with impunity.

The report of the Secretary-General, referring to the situation in Sri Lanka, calls upon the listed offenders in annex II of the report to mend their despicable behaviour and calls upon the Security Council to consider deterrent action against repeated violators. Specifically identifying the terrorist group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as responsible for numerous repeated grave abuses, the Secretary-General has listed that group as a persistent violator, repeating its listing since 2003. The Karuna faction of the LTTE has also been listed as a violator. We look forward to the opportunity to soon consider the issue as it relates to Sri Lanka, in depth and in all its aspects, in the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts.

The Secretary-General suggests in paragraph 149 of his report that increased pressure is required against persistent and recalcitrant violators of child rights such as LTTE by further considering the need to impose targeted measures against those parties. This suggestion of the Secretary-General is in accordance with his recommendation in paragraph 163 of his report, which welcomes the Security Council's continuing consideration of effective targeted measures against parties to armed conflict who continue to systematically commit grave violations against children in armed conflict in defiance of recommendations by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and of Council resolutions. This clearly singles out the terrorist group LTTE as deserving stronger targeted measures.

Almost a decade has now passed since the LTTE gave a public undertaking to cease the recruitment and use of children as combatants, and also to release children within its ranks. This commitment was never implemented by the LTTE, which continued to recruit and use children as combatants even after the Council adopted resolution 1612 (2005), under the terms of which parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children for armed hostilities must cease such practices forthwith, release children within their ranks and enter into action plans with UNICEF or relevant peacekeeping missions.

Repeated violations of all undertakings given to the international community by non-State actors, like the LTTE, must stop. It is our collective responsibility to find ways and means to make such non-State actors fall in line.

The Security Council's initiative to address the issue of children in armed conflict and subsequent efforts by the Security Council Working Group must be made to focus more on the real underlying core issue: the recruitment of children. We must be cautious in considering the expansion of the mandate without addressing the core issue, since such an approach may not usher a change on the ground and will not inspire confidence in the process undertaken by the Security Council.

We agree with the views indicated in paragraph 132 of the report concerning the responsibility of Governments in relation to rehabilitative measures for children who seek special protection and surrender to Government forces. The rehabilitation of children, who have been used as combatants by non-State actors, is as important as preventing children from being recruited for armed conflict. However, rehabilitation efforts to ensure the successful reintegration of children into society require resources and expertise. Tangible international assistance and support for such efforts, as opposed to mere declarations of concern, will be invaluable not only in promoting the welfare of children but also for consolidating peace and peacebuilding efforts.

Collective will is required to take focused action with respect to real issues of concern on the ground. Therefore, first and foremost, the Security Council needs to be more resolute in taking action to prevent children from being used as soldiers and accessories in all conflict situations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of El Salvador.

Mrs. Gallardo Hernández (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, Mr. President, may I begin by wishing you every success during your Presidency.

My delegation welcomes this initiative to convene an open debate on the subject of children and armed conflict. We are dealing with, no doubt, an extremely sensitive matter, not only for its implications in terms of peace and security, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, particularly those of children, but also given the associated consequences in terms of peacebuilding, reconciliation and national reconstruction during the post-conflict period.

El Salvador recognizes, as a matter of principle, the importance of encouraging measures at the national, regional and international levels intended to put an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, which is in violation of applicable international law, in addition to other grave violations committed against children affected by armed conflict.

When viewed from this angle, our delegation echoes the importance of stepping up national efforts intended to establish an appropriate legal framework, which will contribute to more clearly and precisely defining those grave violations. Those include murder and maiming of children, rape and other acts of sexual violence, kidnapping, denial of access to humanitarian assistance intended for children and attacks against schools, nurseries and hospitals, which are frequently perpetrated by the parties in an armed conflict.

As has been broadly reported by relevant United Nations bodies, in an armed conflict children are the target of different forms of sexual and gender violence, including rape, which is prohibited by international humanitarian law as a flagrant violation of their human rights. Clearly, rape is a method of war, which is deliberately employed to humiliate girl children and their families, thereby forcing them to become displaced and causing humanitarian crises.

It should be noted that this negative situation generates a culture of violence and negative values, which may very well be reproduced by other children in different forms, making it difficult for them subsequently to achieve reconciliation with society. Our delegation exhorts the international community to contribute to the establishment of an enabling environment that will bring an end to impunity of those who commit crimes against children, particularly those who promote the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts.

It should also be stated that post-conflict and peacebuilding processes require the international community to work with countries emerging from conflict in their endeavours to implement measures intended to achieve national reconciliation. These include measures to benefit of children who are the victims of violence.

In the view of my delegation, the Peacebuilding Commission might be more closely involved in supporting the mechanisms that exist within the Security Council to deal with these matters, in particular within the context of peacebuilding strategies. In addition, strengthening communication and coordination between bodies within the United Nations system and with post-conflict countries could in turn contribute to bolstering efforts to achieve the reintegration of children in society. In our view, the satisfactory reintegration of children in post-conflict societies is an important element in implementing peacebuilding strategies, and thus should be taken into account in the early planning stage and throughout the implementation of peacebuilding operations.

El Salvador welcomes the dialogue of cooperation between the United Nations system and countries emerging from a situation of armed conflict. Clearly, in a peacebuilding process many of the issues that arose during the armed conflict may continue to have an adverse effect on children, marking them and making it difficult for them to learn a culture of peace in the future.

Therefore, post-conflict countries' societies should have an opportunity to reassess relevant actions once they have achieved greater levels of political maturity and democratic governance as a result of the implementation of peace agreements and through open and transparent dialogue with the international community.

In this regard, attention should be drawn to the importance of continuing to promote a broad-based approach, which incorporates all aspects of political issues, security and human rights, together with fundamental freedoms in post-conflict countries. Consideration should also be given to the need to promote a gradual process in promoting justice, reparation and rehabilitation of victims of conflict.

Lastly, allow me to reiterate the political will of the Government of El Salvador to continue to promote measures intended to strengthen the rule of law and democratic good governance and to step up efforts at the institutional level to guarantee the promotion and the effective protection of the human rights of all of the people of El Salvador, especially the children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guinea.

Mr. Zoumanigui (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): First, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to thank you for organizing this meeting. I also wish to assure you of our complete cooperation. This is an opportunity for me to express our gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Giadalla Ettalhi, Permanent Representative of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for the work achieved in the past month. Allow me to express to Ms. Coomaraswamy, Ms. Veneman and Ms. Becker our appreciation for the presentation of the report and for their statements which further enlightened us on this matter.

The founding fathers of our Organization in adopting its Charter stressed, inter alia, the need for the peoples of the United Nations, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ... to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" and, to that end, "to unite [their] strength to maintain international peace and security."

The conflicts of today, given their new dimensions, affect civilian populations more, in particular those who are the most vulnerable including, inter alia, children. The actions of the international community to find a solution to this situation are encouraging and should be supported. In that respect, we welcome the fact that the Security Council has been dealing with this important matter on a permanent basis since 1999, with particular focus on the full implementation of relevant recommendations and the strengthening of measures to be taken at all levels to put a definitive end to the tragic consequences of conflicts on children worldwide.

We appreciate the report in document S/2007/757, which provides useful information on compliance in ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and also includes information on progress made in the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism and in the development and implementation of action plans.

While welcoming the progress achieved by the parties, my delegation shares the concerns expressed in the report, supports the efforts under way and favours an in-depth consideration of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General.

My delegation notes that the success of any action depends on cooperation. For that reason, we encourage partnership between United Nations bodies on the one hand and between those bodies and other national and international actors on the other, so that the question of children and armed conflict will have a positive outcome. In addition, the Security Council should carry out a comprehensive thematic evaluation of the protection of civilians in armed conflict, encompassing all the issues that have an impact on children and armed conflict: women, peace and security, small arms and light weapons and cross-border matters.

We encourage, in particular cooperation between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, which in our opinion should take into account the issue of children and armed conflict.

My delegation firmly supports a zero-tolerance policy and welcomes the adoption of a comprehensive strategy on assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. This will help the United Nations to help victims of sexual exploitation responsibly and in a coordinated manner. Thus, my delegation, which condemns rape and sexual violence during armed conflict, considers that in no situation should such violence serve as a weapon of war.

We appeal to Member States to attach greater importance to the work of the 2008 Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The scope and tragic consequences of the illicit use of those weapons show that the fight against this scourge requires greater capabilities than those of national entities alone. Thus, it behoves the international community to draw up and implement specific measures for combating the scourge.

Clearly, the participation of my delegation in this meeting is based on the will of my Government to be fully involved in the efforts of the international community to effectively combat the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. Even though Guinea itself has not been the theatre of armed conflict, it belongs to a continent, and in particular to a subregion, which has long been scarred by conflicts that have had a negative impact on the lives of countless children. My Government, aware of its responsibilities, has spared no effort to be involved in the search for a solution to conflicts in the subregion.

Today we are encouraged by the process of peace and stabilization in the countries of the Mano River Union, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau. We invite the international community to give further support to that process. In the view of my delegation, the various experiences gained at the national, subregional, regional and international levels in combating the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict should be shared in order to bring into play the comparative advantages of each organization and country.

Lastly, my delegation expresses the hope that this meeting will make it possible for us to plan future actions on the basis of experience gained in order to better discharge a common and historic duty: to bequeath to the next generation — that is, today's children — a world of peace, security, justice, progress and harmony.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would like also to extend my appreciation to the delegation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for its successful presidency of the Council last month. I wish further to welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and to thank her for her constructive efforts to fulfil her mandate in following the situation of children and armed conflict. I also would like to thank Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, for her briefing.

My delegation took note of the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757) and would like to make the following comments on the situation concerning Iraq. The Iraqi children went through tremendously difficult circumstances during the last three decades due to the irresponsible policies of Saddam's regime. They were among the first victims of chemical weapons used by the former dictator in Halabja and other areas and cities of Iraq. They were victims of forced displacement and mass executions committed by the previous regime as a systematic policy to punish the Iraqi people. The innocent children of Iraq paid a heavy price because of international sanctions and the embargo imposed on Iraq due to the invasion of Kuwait by the dictatorship. The Iraqi regime used the suffering of the Iraqi people, including children, during 13 years of sanctions to pressure the international community and to avoid fulfilling its international obligation.

After the fall of the dictatorship in 2003, Iraqi children were the victims of terrorist acts and sectarian violence in Iraq. Many of them were subjected to daily threats to their lives because of the suicide bombings and the roadside bombs which led to the killing and maiming of several children. We agree with most of the facts outlined in the report concerning the suffering of the Iraqi children due to the terrorist acts of Al-Qaida and other armed groups who target civilians, foremost amongst which are children.

The most recent terrorist act, which took place on 1 February 2008, was a dual bombing in the pet market in Baghdad. It led to casualties and loss of life for dozens of innocent children and women. This is another example of the ruthlessness of this terrorist enemy.

The report has noted that there are indications of children being recruited as combatants by non-State armed groups, Al-Qaida and Al-Qaida-affiliated groups. In this regard, we would like to refer to what has recently been reported by the international media regarding documentaries prepared by Al-Qaida which show clearly the recruitment of children at the age around 11 to carry out suicide operations, kidnappings, armed robberies and the planting of explosive devices. Despite the difficult circumstances, Iraq has witnessed in 2007 positive progress in the situation of children, due to the decrease in the number of terrorist operations and the implementation of the Baghdad law enforcement plan.

The Iraqi Government has been keen to take all possible executive and legislative measures to minimize the suffering of children, to provide them with a decent life and to compensate them for the years of deprivation and suffering they have gone through. The Government has established an inter-ministerial committee — the National Committee for Children — to consider means of improving the situation of children in Iraq. The Iraqi Government has also completed the executive and legislative steps needed to ratify the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1994: the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, both of which entered into force in 2002.

The Iraqi Government is keen to start constructive and positive cooperation with the United Nations to improve the situation of children in Iraq and has extended a formal invitation to Ms. Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, to visit Iraq and to examine the situation of children and the efforts of the Iraqi Government to alleviate their suffering. The Iraqi authorities, through the Permanent Mission of Iraq in New York, are conducting close consultations and coordination with the Office of Ms. Coomaraswamy on this important visit, planned for next month.

The Iraqi authorities have started to implement their plan to train nursery staff and to include nurseries in nutrition programmes. They have also opened nine new nurseries, following approval by Ministry of Health authorities. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has started a special programme for children with mental disabilities. They have also computerized the centres for those with physical disabilities, in addition to starting advanced classes at those institutions. The ministry has also introduced intensive training courses for the teaching staff. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is focusing on families with children and provides them with salaries, under the social protection network. The number of beneficiary families has reached 93,553. The number of visually impaired children included in this programme has reached 20,416, and a further 24,350 paralysed children are included in the programme.

The authorities in Iraq are keen to organize children's festivals, theatres, art exhibitions, photo galleries and various other types of art events for children. They have also organized several workshops, symposiums and conferences focusing on violence against children and the means to combat it. The date 13 July has been set as Iraqi Child Day, which is celebrated officially by the Iraqi Government. A governmental committee was recently established to draft the Iraqi Child Law to be approved by the Iraqi Government and subsequently by the Iraqi parliament.

The Iraqi Government has been keen to operate with United Nations agencies, among them UNICEF, to invest donor contributions, which amounted to $40 million in 2007, in order to deliver critical health care, safe water and sanitation, education and other essential services to millions of children and their families. These funds have enabled the Iraqi health workers to conduct house-to-house immunization campaigns protecting over 4 million children against polio and more than 3 million against measles and mumps, in close partnership with the World Health Organization and UNICEF. As a result of these campaigns, Iraq remains polio-free, and measles cases are dramatically down, from 9,181 in 2004 to just 156 in 2007, as of November.

It is to be recognized that 4.7 million Iraqi primary school children have benefited from the investment in education, including the distribution of critical school materials, the rebuilding and restoring of schools, the addition of extra classrooms for displaced children and the provision of accelerated learning opportunities. A Government-supported assessment of school attendance rates in 2007 is now under way.

The Prime Minister of Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Nuri al-Maliki, has called for a national enquiry into the conditions of children in orphanages and is urging the Iraqi Government to make possible a rapid assessment of all the country's orphanages and juvenile centres as soon as possible. An open monitoring system for the assessment of children's institutions is a top priority, as is improving the skills of care-givers and accelerating community-based child care alternatives.

It is also important to highlight the major role of the partnerships that have made these achievements possible, most notably those with the European Commission, Japan, Italy, Canada and other friendly countries, in addition to other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations.

The Government and the people of Iraq would like on this important occasion to express their sincere appreciation and gratitude to all countries, international organizations and United Nations agencies, foremost among them UNICEF and the World Health Organization, for their continued tremendous efforts to help Iraqi children. We hope for their continued support to improve the situation of Iraqi children and to put an end to their suffering.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, for her efforts in preparing the report. We are looking forward to her visit to Iraq, and we affirm the commitment of the Iraqi Government to cooperate constructively with her to help the children of Iraq.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank the delegation of Panama for having organized this year's important open debate on children and armed conflict. Switzerland takes notes with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757) and welcomes the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and of UNICEF to prevent abuses and to protect children.

Despite certain encouraging developments described in the report, much remains to be done to make the system for the protection of children in armed conflict truly effective. In that context, the Secretary-General's proposals and recommendations deserve our full attention: we need to obtain tangible results on the ground.

Switzerland, which fully endorses the recommendations set out in the report, considers that the Security Council should give particular priority to the following areas. First, consideration should be given to expanding the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to include the six categories of grave violations, in particular rape and other grave forms of sexual violence.

Secondly, a series of specific targeted measures should be taken against parties to armed conflict that are responsible for grave and persistent violations against children. The Security Council should refer to the International Criminal Court all cases on which national courts either have not exercised their jurisdiction or have not done so in accordance with their obligations under international law.

Thirdly, although some progress has been made in this regard, it is imperative to remind all parties to armed conflict listed in the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General that they must prepare and implement concrete action plans.

Fourthly, child protection advisers should be included in both peacekeeping and political missions whenever appropriate. Furthermore, Switzerland calls upon all the parties to armed conflict mentioned in the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General to continue the dialogue that the Security Council has begun with the Governments concerned, the United Nations agencies as well as national and international civil society actors. Only through enhanced coordination and cooperation among all concerned parties will it be possible to improve the protection of children in armed conflict.

Armed conflict leads to an increase in all forms of violence. Among them, trafficking in small arms increases the vulnerability of children in situations of conflict and of post-conflict transition. Switzerland would like the Secretary-General to formulate, in his next report, specific recommendations on the protection of children in armed conflicts in relation to the use of small arms and light weapons.

As a general rule, the gender dimension needs to be taken into consideration more systematically in the international community's response. The Security Council may want to consider the problem of children and armed conflict in conjunction with resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and resolution 1674 (2006), on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Switzerland's support for the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and to encourage it to pursue its work to achieve concrete results so that we may combat more effectively the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other violations of the rights of children, as well as the impunity enjoyed by those responsible for grave abuses and violations against children in armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Pramudwinai (Thailand): On behalf of the Government and the people of Thailand, I wish to warmly congratulate Panama upon its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for February and to express our appreciation to you, Sir, for organizing the open debate on this important topic.

The Thai Government, like the Governments of most other countries, shares the commitment of the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and other relevant parties to protect and improve the well-being of children around the world. But since this morning we have heard, and we continue to hear, various voices of care and concern for the plight of children in all situations of trouble. Some may see this as a fact of life, one that is seemingly perennial, but taking advantage of the fragility of children is not to be tolerated. That practice must be curtailed, and their future ensured.

In this connection, we would like to share with the Council our views on this crucial issue. First, Thailand notes that the Security Council has of late made significant strides in the specific area of children and armed conflict within the context of its principal mandate on the maintenance of international peace and security. We appreciate the commitment and contribution of the Security Council in this area. However, we are of the view that the mechanism established by the Security Council on this particular subject is still in its nascent stage; there is certainly room for improvement and consolidation. Thorough reflection by the Council would be necessary in this regard, and we agree with many speakers that a thorough but incremental, step-by-step approach offers the best way forward.

Secondly, Thailand welcomes the fact that, in conjunction with the Security Council, there has been greater interest within the overall United Nations system on the issue of children. This advancement of the children's agenda can be recognized in various forms and forums, including the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council, the executive boards of specialized agencies, funds and programmes and relevant human rights treaty bodies. In our view, because the issue of children is multidimensional and diverse, our approaches, strategies and instruments should be so as well, bearing in mind the uniqueness, strengths and constraints of each of those various bodies. Against this backdrop, we firmly believe that greater effort should be made by the international community to address the root causes of armed conflict through greater international cooperation in the areas of poverty alleviation and sustainable socio-economic development. Development is another name for peace and security.

Thirdly, the Thai Government has always been fully committed to doing what it can to contribute to the realization of our collective vision of a world fit for children. Our track record in this area, both at home and abroad, speaks for itself and underlines our strong determination to constantly improve the well-being of all our children. For in so doing, we know full well that a strong and sustainable foundation for the peace, security and future development of the country is firmly laid.

As concrete testimony to our commitment, the Thai Government has already become a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We are determined to ensure that we have the most effective domestic legal framework in place for our children. A broad range of policy initiatives has also been implemented to promote and protect the rights of children in Thailand, including the right to education, through a policy of universal access to education. In short, our commitment to the cause of children is a strong and healthy national commitment.

Fourthly, we cannot stress enough that utmost care should be exercised in the preparation of reports of the Secretary-General on such issues as children and armed conflict. It should be clear that the scope of the report on this issue and its follow-up should be strictly restricted to situations of armed conflict. In this context, we would like to echo the view expressed by several previous speakers that any reference in such a report to any country where there is no situation of armed conflict is not only unwarranted but also misleading and should not be repeated in the future.

In conclusion, the Thai Government wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the cause of children. We will continue to work actively with our partners at home and abroad in various areas for the children, our future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): Allow me to begin by joining previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We wish you every success in steering the work of the Council to a successful conclusion. We extend our appreciation to Panama for convening today's debate, which provides an opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitment to ensuring the protection, rights and well-being of children in armed conflict.

We also thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary General, and Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their insightful briefings, delivered this morning.

Since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), a number of important steps has been taken to ensure the protection of children in conflict situations. These include the creation of a monitoring and reporting mechanism to provide accurate and timely information on grave violations against children in war and of the Working Group to develop concrete recommendations on child protection in country-specific situations. Nevertheless, it remains a grim reality that children continue to be subject to grave violations in conflict situations worldwide.

Today's meeting is of particular importance to Afghanistan as a country that has suffered from decades of armed conflict that has had a devastating impact on the most vulnerable part of our population, namely, children. Nevertheless, since 2001, we have achieved considerable progress in promoting and safeguarding the rights of our children.

We remain firm in our commitment to ensure the security and well-being of our children at every stage of their lives. Afghanistan is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols; on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. National legislation has been enacted to implement the Convention and its two Protocols. With the conclusion of our nationwide child demobilization programme, 7,444 underage soldiers recruited by illegal armed groups have been demobilized. As a next step, we have put in place reintegration committees and vocational schools in many provinces to reintegrate former soldiers into civil life. In that regard, we call on our international partners to assist us in implementing such programmes and to facilitate the creation of employment opportunities for our young people.

In addition, strict measures have been adopted to prevent the recruitment of soldiers under the age of 18 into our armed forces. Mechanisms are in place in our security institutions to assess and monitor new soldiers during both the recruitment and training stages to ensure that the minimum age requirement for recruitment is being met.

Regarding child trafficking, our Government has established a special task force to prevent children from being abducted and falling victim to traffickers. Since 2002, 429 cases of child trafficking have been reported, from which 329 children have been rescued. Our Penal Code is one among various domestic laws addressing the abduction and kidnapping of children. Those measures have been complemented by President Karzai's initiative to create an inter-ministerial commission for the prevention of child trafficking in November 2003, as well as by the launch of our national action plan to combat child trafficking.

Despite our progress, terrorism remains a harsh reality in the lives of our children. Terrorists have increased attacks against schools, teachers, schoolchildren and clinics. Attacks on schools and school burnings have kept approximately 300,000 children from attending school out of fear of violence. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, between August 2006 and July 2007 alone, at least 133 incidents of school attacks were reported. Such attacks, which have occurred mainly in the southern provinces, have led to the closing of 384 of the 721 schools in the provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul.

Terrorists have spared no effort to harm all segments of society as they have increased their attacks in densely populated areas or in the vicinity of public gatherings. Such acts have had a devastating impact on the lives of our children. Just three months ago, a terrorist attack against a parliamentary delegation in Baghlan province led to the death of more than 50 children, while another 90 were severely wounded. In that context, I express my delegation's appreciation to the Council for its swift response in condemning the attack on 8 November.

Afghanistan's enemies have resorted to new and brutal tactics. In the most malicious practice conceivable, terrorists are recruiting children and sending them out to function as suicide bombers. As documented in a UNICEF report entitled "Child Alert: Afghanistan", released in October of last year, a 16-year-old Afghan boy was ordered to wear a vest full of explosives and to detonate it in Ghazni province. The report quotes the boy as saying, "The remote control battery was with me, but I could not do it and threw the battery away .... If I didn't do it, they said I would go to hell". In that regard, we remain extremely concerned about the use of religious schools in the region where children are indoctrinated and deceived into carrying out terrorist acts.

We are also concerned about the loss of life and injury suffered by children during counter-terrorism operations, mainly as a result of the Taliban's use of the civilian population as human shields. In that regard, we call on our international partners to exercise the maximum caution and to enhance coordination with Afghan security forces during counter-terrorism operations to avoid the loss of civilian lives.

Despite considerable progress in improving the lives of our children — as seen in the reduction in the infant mortality rate by 85,000 per year and in the increased access to health centres throughout the country — the humanitarian situation of our children remains dire, owing to the prevailing security situation. Hundreds of thousands of Afghan children lack the basic necessities for a decent life. These include food, water, adequate shelter and sanitation facilities. Their situation is further complicated by the difficulty in gaining access to supplies and humanitarian assistance. In that regard, we welcome UNICEF's latest appeal for financial assistance in support of the situation of children in Afghanistan.

Addressing the protection of children in armed conflict requires the collective commitment of the international community. It also necessitates a comprehensive strategy encompassing key pillars. As part of the effort to safeguard the rights of children, the international community should place a special focus on poverty alleviation. lending financial and economic assistance to post-conflict countries so as to enable them to achieve their development goals. By doing so, we will meet the preconditions for the creation of an environment conducive to sustainable human development and the well-being of our children.

My delegation commends the work undertaken by the relevant United Nations agencies to protect and promote the rights of children in armed conflict, particularly the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office for the Coordination of

Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. We are particularly grateful to UNICEF for its ongoing efforts in support of a better and brighter future for our children.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore the commitment of Afghanistan to ensure the protection of children's rights in general. We remain committed to supporting every measure, both within the Council and within other relevant organs of the United Nations, to protect the rights of children in armed conflict. After all, by protecting our children, we are securing our future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Peru.

Ms. Tincopa (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Sir, and your delegation for having organized this important debate. We also wish to express our gratitude for the report submitted by the Secretary-General (S/2007/757) and for the statements made this morning by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Executive Director of UNICEF and the Representative of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict on behalf of non-governmental organizations.

Because of the conditions of underdevelopment and exclusion, protecting children is extremely difficult in many of the countries covered by the Secretary-General's report and by the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Conflict is a circumstance in which the situation of children requires redoubled and concerted efforts. Therefore, Peru supports the Secretary-General's recommendations and requests the Security Council and the other bodies concerned to adopt them.

States have equipped themselves with binding instruments to protect human rights and humanitarian law. Even in the context of conflict situations, we must reaffirm the importance of making progress in the universalization and effective implementation of such law. For its part, the Security Council should continue to employ, or expand the use of, available instruments and measures to halt the abuse of children's rights in conflict situations.

We wish to highlight the need for Member States — particularly those affected by armed conflict — to continue, within the framework of their legal systems, to undertake or adopt measures to bring to justice those responsible for the recruitment and use of children and other grave crimes committed against children. Neither amnesty nor impunity is acceptable.

We would also like to highlight the role that has been played by the International Criminal Court in cases such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the importance of expanding the categories of offences against children falling within its jurisdiction. Support for the work of international justice mechanisms is part of an holistic approach by the Security Council to support peace, truth and national reconciliation. Peru is pleased that it has been able to contribute to the prosecution of those accused of these and other crimes before the International Criminal Court.

We agree with the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Security Council attach the same importance to all categories of grave violations, not only the recruitment and use of child soldiers, but also the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools, hospitals and refugee centres, and denial of access to humanitarian aid that specifically targets children.

The task of implementing resolution 1612 (2005) remains pending and should be approached in a coordinated fashion, by States, the United Nations system and civil society alike. Also pending is the updating and strengthening of existing mechanisms to achieve the objectives of resolution 1612 (2005) under the new circumstances of insecurity that children confront, particularly in countries where the Security Council has established peacekeeping operations or political missions.

To this end, Peru considers it important that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict should also include in her reports, in a disaggregated manner, information on rapes and sexual abuse of children, particularly girls, along with information from peacekeeping operations and the Department of Political Affairs. It would also be desirable to bolster the capacity of such missions with child protection advisers.

As borne out by the improved situation of children in Côte d'Ivoire, in stabilized areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Nepal, when a country's political leaders reach a viable and sustainable peace agreement and assume the responsibility to protect their population, particularly their children, conditions tend to improve.

It is for this very reason that emphasis should be placed on the need for the Security Council and the other United Nations organs to support the work of the Peacebuilding Commission in order to adopt an integral approach to managing post-conflict processes with a view to preventing the resurgence of violence.

In conclusion, we are of the view that human rights, peace, international security and development are mutually interlinked. Dealing with them in an integral manner will contribute more effectively to successfully addressing issues concerning children, especially those in conflict situations. Their lives and the future of countries in conflict or emerging from conflict depend on our efforts, as, ultimately, does the stability of entire regions everywhere in the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mrs. Kafanabo (United Republic of Tanzania): At the outset, allow me to join other speakers in congratulating Panama on having organized this open debate on children and armed conflict. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Executive Director of UNICEF and Jo Becker from Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict for their comprehensive updates on this issue.

We wish to state our satisfaction with the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF in the protection of children and the promotion of their rights in situations of armed conflict.

We also thank the Secretary-General for his detailed report on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757) and welcome the recommendations contained therein.

It is a matter of serious concern that many children are losing their childhood and even their lives as a result of ongoing conflicts in different parts of the world. It is even more disturbing that, now, children are not only caught in the crossfire of the warring parties, but are more and more becoming deliberate targets and unwitting victims of violence and abuse. Children are forcibly turned into cannon fodder and killing machines as child soldiers and are lured into destructive covert missions.

My delegation is further concerned with the escalating incidences of rape and sexual abuse of children, especially girls, in times of conflict. We strongly condemn rape and sexual violence and abuse in all of their manifestations. The gravity of rape and sexual violence and abuse lies not only in the physical trauma they cause, but in the long-term psychological trauma as well. Means to provide assistance and support to victims of rape, sexual violence and abuse have thus to be provided. We note the decline in cases of sexual violence and abuse brought against peacekeepers. We urge the Secretary-General not to relent on the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

We also condemn the attacks on civilians and public properties, especially those targeting schools and teachers. Stern measures need to be taken against all those who are in violation of international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict. We need to send a clear message that those violating the rights of children, including those recruiting children and using them to fight adult wars, will be prosecuted with the full weight of international law. We thus call upon Member States to end impunity and to prosecute those responsible for violations of the rights of children.

We commend the efforts of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the International Criminal Court in prosecuting such persons and urge Governments to support their work. We would further request the Security Council to consider targeted measures for the worst offenders, especially those who are repeatedly mentioned in the reports of the Secretary-General.

The monitoring and reporting mechanism that has been created through resolution 1612 (2005) has invigorated our quest to improve the situation of children in armed conflict. We are encouraged by the positive results on the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, including the creation of awareness and dialogue on the issues affecting children in situations of conflict. The mechanism also provides a good example of teamwork and collaborative efforts among Governments, United Nations country teams and civil society organizations on the ground.

We note also that other countries that are not on the agenda of the Security Council have volunteered to implement the monitoring and reporting mechanism. That is testimony to its usefulness. We would thus call upon the Security Council to extend the monitoring and reporting mechanism to all situations of children in armed conflict, not only those on the agenda of the Council. It is therefore important that the monitoring and reporting mechanism be supported and adequately financed.

We commend the efforts of the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in following up on the reports from the monitoring and reporting mechanism. We would, however, encourage members of the Working Group also to undertake field visits to see the reality on the ground. We welcome the Working Group's adoption of the toolkit on children and armed conflict. The Security Council is encouraged to make greater use of the toolkit.

While progress has been made on improving the situation of children in armed conflict, the situation on the ground is still unsatisfactory and is becoming more complex.

We need also to address the root causes of conflicts, as well as other political, economic and social issues that can improve the situation of children and other civilians in situations of conflict. At the same time, we need to support the rehabilitation and the reintegration of all children who have been associated with armed forces. In that respect, there is an express need for child protection mandates and child protection advisers in all Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Political Affairs missions, as appropriate.

In conclusion, we urge the Security Council to continue to be seized with the issue of children and armed conflict and make it one of its priority issues.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Edrees (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council, as well for convening this interactive debate on children in armed conflict. We are also grateful for the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General, prepared by his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. I should like to thank the Special Representative for her comprehensive presentation of the report and for her dedicated efforts, together with the members of her Office, to help eliminate all forms of violence against children in armed conflict.

Egypt has been pleased to extend all necessary support to the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), which established the Working Group to monitor all violations perpetrated against children in armed conflict. Egypt has regularly participated in all open debates held by the Security Council on the matter to join in evaluating efforts to protect children in armed conflict and to step up international efforts to that end. In so doing, I would like to reflect on some elements presented in the report.

First, Egypt supports the Secretary-General's approach in preparing the report before us and fully understands the methodology used to interpret the mandate of his Special Representative, especially in monitoring all forms of violence against children in armed conflict, including compliance in ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and other grave violations. Such violations include the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abduction, denial of humanitarian access to children, attacks on schools and hospitals by parties to armed conflict, and forced detention in violation of international law and international humanitarian law, which also apply equally to children suffering under foreign occupation.

It is therefore necessary for the mandate of the Security Council's monitoring and reporting mechanism to be extended to cover situations related to children in occupied Palestine, as reflected in the report, to an extent equal to its coverage of the suffering of Lebanese children from Israel's extensive and unprecedented use of cluster bombs during the July 2006 conflict in southern Lebanon, which took place under the eyes of the Security Council. All violations should be treated on an equal footing, and no child should be abandoned in such conflicts or any other without international protection.

Secondly, Egypt supports most of the recommendations made in the report of the Secretary-General, especially the recommendation that the Security Council consider giving equal care and attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern listed in the two annexes and equal weight to all categories of grave violations, including not only the recruitment and use of children, but also the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abduction, attacks against schools or hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access to children. Egypt also supports the recommendations aimed at making available adequate resources and necessary funding by donors to national Governments, the United Nations and partners to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of children in armed conflicts and to address immediately the grave humanitarian, human rights and development consequences of cluster munitions, particularly for children. However, we also believe that the annexes should have included a reference to Israel's violation of its commitments as an occupying Power, as stipulated in the Fourth Geneva Convention, particularly those related to guaranteeing peace and security for children in the occupied Arab territories in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.

Thirdly, Egypt expresses its appreciation for the extensive efforts of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, pursuant to its current mandate, without the suggested expansion to include, as recommended, imposing targeted measures and monitoring the implementation of such measures by parties to armed conflict who commit grave violations against children in all situations of concern. The proposed expansion of the mandate of the Working Group could affect the necessary balance in addressing all aspects of situations of concern listed in the annexes, whether or not they are included as items on the Security Council's agenda, without concentrating heavily on a certain aspect at the expense of others.

Finally, if it is to meet all its goals, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict should coordinate with the new Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, which was created under General Assembly resolution 62/141, particularly with respect to violations stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the worst forms of child labour, in order to achieve the needed complementarity and to fill any legal or practical gaps in dealing with all situations of the use of children in armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Nicaragua.

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation commends you, Sir, for convening this important meeting on a subject of particular importance to us all. I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his extensive and detailed annual report on children and armed conflict, contained in document S/2007/757, which reflects progress and challenges and takes global stock of that thorny problem in the light of international instruments, including relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

Children are humankind's greatest treasure. They represent the continuity of our species, our future, and the bridge to generations to come. According to the Gospel of Saint Matthew, Jesus Christ, in a discussion with his apostles at which they argued about which among them was the most important, placed a child in their midst and said "unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (*The Holy Bible, Matthew 18:3-4*).

My delegation shares the concerns referred to in the Secretary-General's report about a series of acts, undertaken in armed conflict throughout the world, that violate children's human rights. Those include the recruitment of children and internal displacement; cross-border incursions by armed groups to recruit children in refugee camps; the targeting of girls and boys alike for sexual and gender-based violence, including rape; the growing frequency of children being detained for their alleged link to armed groups, in contravention of international norms, concerning which the Secretary-General cites instances in countries on three continents; systematic and deliberate attacks on students, teachers and schools, particularly schools for girls, with the aim of preventing them from studying; and the use of weapons with indiscriminate effect, including cluster munitions, in areas with civilian populations, with serious consequences, particularly for children and long after conflicts have ended.

In addition, in armed conflicts there is organ trafficking, separation of families and the indirect effects such as the loss of basic services, including provision of drinking water, sanitation and health and education services, and also increased poverty, malnutrition and disease and the terrible psychological impact of war on children.

Among the signs of progress, the report of the Secretary-General points to major precedents for ending impunity for those who commit crimes against children, such as the confirmation of charges against various suspects by the International Criminal Court and the pronouncement of sentences by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, including with regard to ending the recruitment of children by the forces in conflict in Côte d'Ivoire. It is also important that national authorities, who are responsible for ending impunity, prosecute those who violate the rights of children in their territories. Particular attention should be given to the situation of children in post-conflict situations.

We would like to support the recommendations of the Secretary-General set out in his report, especially those regarding equal weight to all categories of grave violations against children, not just those related to preventing the recruitment of children by armed forces or groups; support for countries in implementing the monitoring and reporting mechanism within the framework of resolution 1612 (2005); the possibility of targeted measures against parties that continue to commit grave violations against children; and immediate consideration of the grave humanitarian, human rights and development consequences of cluster munitions.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): The State of Qatar attaches great importance to the issue of children and armed conflict. I therefore thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to participate in this important discussion today. I would like also to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her important efforts and for her illuminating briefing.

Despite the almost universal ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, millions of children in conflict-ridden areas are, on an almost daily basis, still subject to killing, maiming, abduction, recruitment and rape or other forms of sexual violence. Children who are victims of the circumstances in which they live in those areas are also subject to another type of attack that makes them permanently vulnerable to practices that violate their right to survival and development. Here I refer to attacks on their minds that violate their right to the very education and knowledge that develops their ability to face the conditions of life imposed on them. Their schools are targeted, their textbooks are burned and their teachers are killed. Such conditions put children in an environment that invites them to carry weapons and subjects them to repeated economic and sexual exploitation.

Just over ten years, Ms. Graça Machel submitted a report on the situation of children in armed conflict. In her study, she identified major gaps in the provision of education in conflict-ridden areas. She highlighted the need to ensure continuity of the different phases of education, from early childhood education to higher education, during times of conflict, and to stand up to the repeated targeting of educational facilities. She highlighted also the need to attach greater importance to secondary education, which has become non-existent in conflicts.

Since the preparation of that report, there has been a better understanding of education and its role as a mechanism of protection and a means for the prevention of conflicts. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms established by the Security Council have become highly capable of detecting serious violations targeting children in conflict-torn areas and have made concrete progress in ending the recruitment of children in some areas.

Despite those positive developments and the creation of multiple legal and operational mechanisms, education in conflict areas has reached a stage of the utmost gravity. Statistical reports indicate that 43 million children in various regions of the world affected by armed conflict are deprived of basic education. Such reality puts us far behind on the road to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which call on States to provide a full course of primary education by 2015. Furthermore, the reports of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict note repeated and deliberate targeting of schoolchildren, especially girls, and of teachers, not to mention attacks on schools and educational buildings.

Despite international appeals that have been launched to meet the educational needs in conflict areas since the International Conference on Education for All, in Dakar in 2000, education rates remain low and in some cases non-existent in those areas. That is why the State of Qatar has joined States and international organizations that call for giving special attention to the areas of education and the elimination of illiteracy during and after conflicts.

Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Misnad, Consort of His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, has had a major impact at the national, regional and international levels in drawing attention to support for education efforts in poor countries and in countries affected by various conflicts, especially the education of girls and young people and providing them with skills needed for daily life, based on the belief that education is the best means to contain violence and establish peace and calm.

Her Highness has contributed to the integration of education in programmes of humanitarian relief and emergency responses in the State of Qatar. One of the most important of those are the Reach Out to Asia initiative, which sought to participate in the process of rebuilding the educational infrastructure in many countries, including Pakistan, Lebanon and Bangladesh.

As UNESCO's Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education, Her Highness has expressed her concern in several international forums about the consequences on education that result from tragedies that triggers the flame of violence in areas of conflict. This situation has prompted Her Highness to launch many educational initiatives of international dimensions, including the establishment of the International Fund for Higher Education in Iraq to confront the rapid deterioration that has afflicted the educational infrastructure in that country. Qatar has contributed $15 million to that Fund. At the end of February Her Highness will sponsor the UNESCO Regional Review Conference for the Middle East and North Africa in Doha, through which she will seek to mobilize regional efforts in order to reach a consensus on the issue of the protection and promotion of education in situations of conflicts in the region, with special focus on the plight of refugees.

Her Highness has not hesitated to convey her message, which aims to strengthen the global responsibility to ensure quality education in times of conflict and emergencies. She believes that such responsibility needs to be extended to include the United Nations system with all its committees and organs, including the Security Council.

At this important meeting, Her Highness calls on the Security Council to join the international campaign to ensure that the utmost importance is attached to the situation of education in areas affected by armed conflict, within the framework of the Security Council's agenda and to devote equal attention to ensuring the right to education during conflicts and in post-conflict peacebuilding situations through rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, and calls for the full enforcement of all legal and operational standards.

The message of Her Highness emphasizes that quality education has cumulative benefits, which reduce the impact of conflict on children and help prevent future conflicts. History has proven that. Historically, lack of equal access to education has been one of the root causes of conflicts such as the genocide in Rwanda and the ethnic conflicts in Kosovo. In her message, Her Highness stresses that the Security Council should consider the issue of the lack of educational opportunities for children and young people during conflicts as one of the root causes of existing armed conflicts, and not just as a product of them. Such children and young people will be highly vulnerable to becoming involved in military action and sexual slavery if they are constantly denied quality education. They would thus become a factor for instability and for the continuing cycle of violence that triggers conflicts and crises. That is precisely what we are witnessing in today's world.

We recognize the importance of the concrete results that have been achieved through the monitoring mechanism established by resolution 1612 (2005) and the important role of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts. It is therefore imperative that we further develop workplans for existing mechanisms, in order to ensure the right to education in times of conflict and crisis and in post-conflict peacebuilding situations. In that regard, we must take into account fundamental issues, including, first, prevention, by all means necessary, of the repeated and deliberate targeting of schoolchildren and teachers, schools and other educational institutions, by considering them to be protected against any and all attacks aimed at undermining and paralysing education; secondly, putting an end to impunity for perpetrators of such crimes against education and learning; thirdly, including programmes to support the continuity of education in emergency humanitarian responses in time of conflict; fourthly, attaching great importance to the education sector during the stabilization, peacebuilding and reconstruction phases in such countries; fifthly, providing continuous support once the emergency is over; and finally, ensuring that those important aspects are a strategic priority in the programme of work of the Security Council and its various committees and other subsidiary bodies.

We must not lose sight of the fact that children are the most precious resource for building peaceful communities. The Government of Qatar, with the guidance and support of Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al-Misnad, will seek to cooperate with international partners and international non-governmental organizations for the purpose of ensuring the right to education in conflict areas. The Security Council must also renew its commitment to international efforts for the protection and promotion of the right of children to education, in order to promote international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Ney (Germany): Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered this morning by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to add my voice to those who have expressed their appreciation to the presidency for including the important item of children and armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council. Our particular thanks go to the Secretary-General for his most recent insightful reports on this issue, to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her dedicated work in taking this agenda forward; and to France for its ongoing commitment in dealing with this issue as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflicts.

The German Government attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, in particular to the situation of children affected by armed conflict. We welcome the progress made on this issue. At the same time, we are mindful of the fact that much more remains to be done.

An estimated 300,000 child soldiers continue to exist worldwide, and tens of thousands of children are still killed, maimed, raped or abducted from their homes as a result of unlawful recruiting practices every year. Our work is far from over.

The Security Council has come a long way in dealing with this issue since it was first put on the Council's agenda in 1998. The adoption of resolution 1612 (2005) is rightfully regarded as a milestone in creating an effective international monitoring and reporting mechanism for children and armed conflict.

The first signs of progress are evident. Some parties to conflicts listed in the annexes of United Nations reports have shown a greater consideration of this subject matter, and some have adopted action plans commensurate with the United Nations recommendation to end the use of child soldiers and illegal recruiting practices. Others have committed themselves to a more regular dialogue with the United Nations to create preconditions for their de-listing from the United Nations list of perpetrators.

Under the Security Council's monitoring and reporting mechanism, ample information and evidence of grave violations has been collected in six major categories of violations against children, while focusing on the illegal recruiting and use of children as child soldiers. We fully agree with that focus. However, there are three points I would like to highlight in particular.

First, to adequately address all aspects related to violations against children in armed conflict, we must not shy away from including new perspectives in the scope of our dealing with these issues. Sexual violence is one such issue that deserves our undivided attention. Perpetrators should be included in the annexes to the reports of the Secretary-General.

Secondly, we must also speak a clear language with conflict parties that keep appearing on the lists of perpetrators or with parties that have chosen to ignore persistent calls to cease their illegal practices with regard to children in armed conflict. In cases where national systems fail to provide adequate protection for children in armed conflict, the Security Council should act and refer such violations to the International Criminal Court for further investigation and possible prosecution.

Thirdly, another important area for enhanced attention by the Security Council is the mainstreaming of the issue of children and armed conflict in United Nations peacekeeping and political missions, for instance through child protection advisers and enhanced cooperation with relevant United Nations actors such as UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The report of the Secretary-General, for instance, clearly shows that there is an interrelation between the issues of refugees, internally displaced persons and armed conflict, and the likelihood of children becoming involved as soldiers in volatile situations in the aftermath of armed conflict. Here too, the United Nations faces challenges that are yet to be mastered.

Germany fully supports the analysis and recommendations outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757). We remain firmly committed to joining hands with all those striving to end the use of child soldiers and the plight of all children affected by armed conflict. In the context of conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation, the German Government already supports measures countering the recruitment of child soldiers, their reintegration into civilian life, for example in the Sudan and Nepal, and measures addressing all aspects related to violations against children and women in armed conflicts. We look forward to further consideration of these issues within the Security Council and with like-minded partners beyond.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): I wish to commend you, Mr. President, for the initiative in holding an open debate on the issue of children and armed conflict, an issue that is given high importance by my Government. I wish also to thank you for the opportunity to speak in the debate.

Myanmar has gone through more than four decades of insurgency and has recently emerged from a situation of armed conflict with the return to the legal fold of 17 major insurgent groups. Only a few fringe insurgent groups such as the Karen National Union (KNU), Karenni National Progressive Party and Shan State Army-South still continue to take up arms against the Government and engage in terrorist activities against the population. Except for counter-insurgency operations against these insurgent groups, major military campaigns are no longer conducted in my country. The Government is able to bring about peace and security in almost all corners of Myanmar.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2007/757) reflected some, but not all, of the important activities undertaken by the Government of Myanmar to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers. In spite of the commitment made by the Government at the highest level that no child under 18 years will be recruited into the military, and despite the concrete steps taken by my Government — some of which are reflected in the Secretary-General's reports S/2007/666 and S/2007/757 — we are greatly disappointed that the Myanmar national army, Tatmadaw Kyi, is still listed in Annex 1 of the Secretary-General's latest report. I strongly urge that Tatmadaw Kyi be taken off of the list.

Let me again reiterate that Myanmar's military is an all-volunteer army and that, under the defence services act and relevant regulations, the minimum age for recruitment is 18 years old. In order to prevent under-age children who lie about their age from getting into the military, and in order to institute stringent scrutiny and educate the public, the Government in 2004 set up a high-level committee to prevent recruitment of under-age children. The committee is headed by the Secretary One of the State Peace and Development Council, who is also the Adjutant-General of the Armed Forces. The Government is implementing stringent scrutiny at the recruitment stage, at the training stage and even after the training period.

As a result of strict scrutiny, between February 2007 and January 2008 some 962 under-age persons were rejected during the recruitment stage. Between 2004 and January 2008, 172 people who had slipped through the initial scrutiny were discharged from the military. Between 2002 and January 2008, disciplinary action was taken against 44 military personnel who failed to strictly abide by the recruitment criteria.

We are also closely cooperating with the United Nations country team in Myanmar, including UNICEF. We have drawn up a plan of action and have regularly provided updates to the United Nations country team regarding the activities of the committee, including detailed information on under-age children who were discharged, and disciplinary action was taken against military recruiters who contravened regulations.

As part of the cooperation with the United Nations, since 2004 we have invited the United Nations resident coordinator and the UNICEF representative to visit the recruitment centres, training facilities and military establishments. We have also invited the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF and, more recently, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Myanmar. During the Special Representative's visit, we agreed to cooperate in the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), and we appointed the Director-General of the Ministry of Social Welfare as the focal point. Those developments were reflected in the aforementioned reports of the Secretary-General. Most recently, at the suggestion of the Special Representative, the Director-General of International Organizations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was nominated as an additional focal point for implementing the resolution 1612 (2005).

Education is an important element in addressing the issue of child soldiers. The end of the conflict in former insurgency areas has enabled the Government to build hundreds of schools in those areas. Additionally, in order to educate military personnel, police personnel, staff members of relevant ministries and the general public, the Government, actively assisted by the UNICEF, has conducted a number of seminars and workshops. In November and December 2007 4 workshops and seminars were held, in which both World Vision and Save the Children took active part. They were followed by a number of multiplier courses in various states and divisions. Public awareness campaigns have been intensified to educate the general public.

We see some improvement in the report of the Secretary-General. We noted that it now includes the situation of children in Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan. But for some inexplicable reason the groups that are clearly mentioned in the body of the report for recruiting child soldiers and wounding children in those situations were not listed in the annexes. We would strongly urge objectivity and fairness in treating all situations that affect children in armed conflict.

The Secretary-General's report mentioned that United Nations country teams are primary sources of information for the report and that the information in the report is gathered, vetted and verified for accuracy. This certainly is not the case with regard to allegations concerning Tatmadaw Kyi and the insurgent groups that have returned to the legal fold. In contrast, the remaining insurgent groups are given undue favourable treatment.

We are greatly disturbed that in the annex to the report Tatmadaw Kyi is falsely described. I quote, "This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming and denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period." This is added despite the admission in the report that "these reports, however, cannot be confirmed". In view of this, I would like to urge that this reference to Tatmadaw Kyi be deleted.

The issue of protection of children in general and children in armed conflict in particular is too important to be politicized. It is in this spirit that I find objectionable the unfounded allegations made earlier in the morning, some of which have even found their way into the report. These allegations have crept into the report because of lack of cooperation with the Member Government. To resolve the issue of children and armed conflict, cooperation with the Government is most crucial. In fact, resolution 1612 (2005) clearly stipulated that the monitoring and reporting mechanisms must operate with the participation of and in cooperation with the national Government. It also stipulates that any dialogue with non-State armed groups must be conducted in the context of peace processes where they exist and in the cooperation framework between the United Nations and the concerned Government.

That has not been the case with regard to Myanmar. Cooperation needs transparency. On the ground, we have a close working relationship with the United Nations country team. In fact, to be transparent, the United Nations country team has volunteered to share its report. We are disturbed that, owing to the objection by the Office of the Special Representative, the United Nations country team was unable to do so. Let me stress that it is only through cooperation and partnership and acting transparently that we can address the issue of children and armed conflict.

In this spirit, my delegation will continue to cooperate with the Security Council Working Group. Here, I wish to express our support for the view expressed earlier that more transparency and improvement in the Group's working methods would certainly enhance its effectiveness.

Let me close by once again reiterating our commitments made at the highest level that no one under 18 years of age will be recruited into the Myanmar armed forces. I wish also to inform the Council that the six armed groups that have come back to the legal fold — the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, Kachin Independence Army, Karenni National People's Liberation Front, Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, Karen National Union-Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council and the United Wa State Army — have committed themselves and openly declared that they will not recruit child soldiers.

The Government of Myanmar will continue its cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, whose integrity and fairness we hold in high esteem. We will intensify our cooperation with the United Nations country team in general and UNICEF in particular. Together we will work for the protection and promotion of children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Montoya (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, and the delegation of Panama for the excellent work in the presidency of the Council during the month of February. My delegation appreciates the initiative taken in convening this open debate. My delegation thanks, and takes note of the informative briefings by, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Executive Director of UNICEF. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his seventh report to the Council on this topic (S/2007/757).

Parallel to the adoption and implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in Colombia there has been a process of strengthening institutions, underlining the unequivocal commitment of my country to the welfare of children. Since 1991 Colombia has been a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2005, we became a State party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention.

The legal framework in Colombia prohibits the recruitment of children under the age of 18. Furthermore, national legislation defines minors who are used by illegal armed groups as victims. One of the main lines of action of the Colombian State concerns the prevention of recruitment by those groups.

The Colombian Institute of Family Welfare has developed a programme to prevent recruitment, which operates, inter alia, through investment in areas of risk, strengthening institutional networks, care of children, food security promotion, prevention of family violence and through education, health, and income generation tools.

Since 2004, the central command of the military forces has been conducting the campaign "Better prevention than demobilization". Through its permanent directive of May 2005, the highest ranks in the military were ordered to develop activities for preventing recruitment by illegal armed groups. In addition, the Ministry of Defence issued in March 2007 a directive in which it prohibits all members of the armed forces to use children for intelligence purposes.

The report of the Secretary-General describes the positive results achieved through the demobilization process in Colombia. More than 46,000 persons who belonged to illegal armed groups have been demobilized. Of the 11 self-defence groups listed in annex II to the report of the Secretary-General submitted in February 2005 (S/2005/72), only two appear in the seventh report, and today they are practically dismantled. With the disappearance of the self-defence armed structures, the danger of forced recruitment by them has also ceased.

On 3 December 2007, the Government created the intersectorial commission for the prevention of recruitment and use of children, adolescents and youth by illegal armed groups. One of the main responsibilities of this commission will be to make recommendations for updating the national policy framework to reinforce the prevention of recruitment and use of children by those groups. The composition of the commission, which is headed by the Vice-President of the Republic and is composed by various State Ministers and other high-level officials, guarantees a comprehensive perspective of the different aspects of this issue.

The report of the Secretary-General includes, in paragraph 116, a reference to four criminal groups devoted to drug trafficking as new organized illegal armed groups. It is necessary to emphasize that since these are criminal organizations devoted to drug-trafficking, they are being combated as such by the competent authorities in Colombia; thus they can only be subject to State action and the weight of the law in order to dismantle their structures and take them before the justice system.

On those and other topics concerning Colombia contained in the seventh report, the Government has submitted and will continue to submit the pertinent clarification to the Office of the Special Representative, as well as to other relevant actors.

Let me now refer to some general aspects of the report. The reasons for which the Security Council gave priority to situations that are on its agenda are still valid. In that regard, the Council should continue to concentrate that priority on the situations that are in annex I of the Secretary-General's report and maintain a different treatment for the situations included in annex II.

Also, the Council should continue to give different weight and higher precedence to the essential element that gave origin to the mechanism, that is, the problem of the recruitment and use of children. It is equally important that, concerning targeted measures, the Council rigorously observe Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Colombia reiterates the importance of taking into account the central role of national Governments in the protection of and effective assistance to children. Any action by the United Nations should be carried out in consultation and coordination with the respective Governments.

Lastly, Colombia reaffirms its will to continue working with the United Nations system in strengthening existing national measures and institutions for the protection and promotion of the rights of children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Frommelt (Liechtenstein): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and her Office for their dedication to advancing the work of the United Nations on this topic. The report (S/2007/757) makes again for disturbing reading. We are alarmed by the escalating number of systematic and deliberate attacks on schools with weapons having indiscriminate effects such as cluster munitions, as well as by evidence suggesting that camps for internally displaced persons are one of the prime recruiting grounds for child soldiers.

Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) established a monitoring and reporting mechanism for serious violations of the rights of the child at the field level, as well as a Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict here in New York. As this decision has proven to have a positive effect on the ground, we believe it is important to keep the momentum to further develop and enhance tools aimed at improving the safety and security of children affected by armed conflicts.

In accordance with resolution 1612 (2005), the monitoring and reporting mechanism provides reliable information on situations listed in annexes I and II of the report, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence against children, illicit exploitation of natural resources, abduction of children and the denial of humanitarian access. However, only one out of these six grave violations — the recruitment and use of child soldiers — currently triggers the inclusion of countries in annex I of the report. We believe that the role of the monitoring and reporting mechanism could be significantly enhanced if other violations were accorded the same effect and if all types of violations were given equal weight.

It is, in fact, difficult to understand how differential treatment of grave violations of children's rights in various conflicts can be compatible with the universality of human rights and the principles of international humanitarian law. Political considerations must not override the fundamental rules of protection for the most vulnerable members of society. To further strengthen the monitoring and reporting mechanism, we welcome the information provided by non-governmental organizations and call for the inclusion of a child protection adviser in the mandate of all future peacekeeping missions and, where appropriate, political missions.

Any measures taken by the Working Group in response to grave violations of the rights of the child have to be complemented by effective enforcement. An option in this regard is the expansion of the Working Group's mandate to recommending targeted measures, including arms embargos, bans on military assistance and the imposition of travel restrictions on individuals. Moreover, we support the recommendation in the

Secretary-General's report that the Security Council refer violations of the rights of the child that fall within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court to that Court for investigation and prosecution.

Liechtenstein has been actively involved in the development of the United Nations mechanism to address the plight of children affected by armed conflict since its inception. As a member of the Group of Friends of children affected by armed conflict, we will continue to do so, and we hope that this open debate will lead to the expansion of the criteria for the inclusion of situations in annex I of the reports of the Secretary-General, thereby improving the situation of children in armed conflicts worldwide.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Islam (Bangladesh): I am delivering this statement on behalf of my Ambassador, who has been held up by a previously scheduled pressing engagement.

The Security Council returns once more to the important issue of children and armed conflict. The delegation of Bangladesh welcomes this opportunity to participate in the debate. I thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and analytical report on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757). We agree with his action-oriented recommendations and urge their appropriate implementation.

We commend the United Nations for its system-wide response to the needs of war-affected children. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, deserves our particular praise for her dedicated efforts in this regard.

We are encouraged to see that the measures taken by the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict have had some positive impact in ameliorating the condition of children affected by armed conflict around the globe. The monitoring and reporting mechanism of the Council is also praiseworthy. In this context, we appreciate the compliance by certain countries and parties to conflicts with the recommendations of the Working Group, and we urge others to follow suit. However, ensuring compliance by non-State actors and armed groups continues to be a big challenge; we must try and address it in a more resolute manner.

We support the idea of using child protection advisers to provide prompt advocacy and response for the protection of children in order to mainstream child protection in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We call upon relevant parties to conflicts to develop and implement concrete, time-bound action plans, in close collaboration with United Nations peacekeeping operations, in order to halt and prevent violations and abuses against children and their recruitment and use in armed conflict.

It is encouraging to note that, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report, strengthening the United Nations institutional framework, the strict monitoring and enforcement mechanism and the code of conduct have resulted in marked progress in preventing and reducing incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse of children by peacekeepers and other United Nations personnel. We believe that other ongoing efforts in this regard, such as strengthening the accountability of uniformed contingent personnel and integrating victim support and assistance, particularly for children, in the relevant programmes, will further improve the situation.

The vulnerable situation of children in post-conflict societies needs special attention. Long after the guns have fallen silent, children remain traumatized and permanently scarred by the brutality of war. For peace to be sustained, these children must be more effectively rehabilitated and reintegrated into their communities. The Peacebuilding Commission should have this issue permanently on its agenda while working in any country-specific configuration.

Since recruitment of children by armed groups is closely linked with internal displacement and refugee issues, there should be cross-regional initiatives and cooperation among neighbouring States, in addition to United Nations efforts, to address the problem in a holistic manner. We are also concerned at the increasing number of children in detention for their alleged association with armed groups. We believe that those children should be given the protections of law admissible under juvenile justice systems.

It is well documented that children are the ones who suffer the most under unregulated sanction regimes. The Council has a duty to ensure that sanctions do not affect the innocent. Issues of children under foreign occupation also need to be appropriately addressed.

There is no doubt that children are the most hapless victims of conflict. Violence is often ingrained in their psyche and often becomes the only solution known to them in seeking redress. The root causes of conflict should therefore be addressed in their proper perspective. To prevent today's victims from becoming tomorrow's perpetrators, the values of a culture of peace must be inculcated in every child. United Nations efforts should promote a culture of peace through peace education programmes and other non-violent approaches to conflict prevention and resolution.

Denied the protection of traditional institutions like the family, stripped of the treasure and innocence of childhood and faced with societal breakdown and the erosion of values and of the rule of law, children affected by armed conflict suffer lasting adverse consequences for their development. Girl children are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence. We urge the Security Council to mobilize a more coordinated, committed and strengthened international response to further advance the agenda in order to better protect our children from war. As a State party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, Bangladesh remains committed to our collective responsibility to ensure a better life for our children — free from poverty, exploitation and violence.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Benin.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I congratulate Panama, your country, most warmly. It has been a very long day, and it has not yet come to an end. But it has been worthwhile because we are dealing with the cause of children, who are the future of our planet.

Three years ago, in February 2005, my country, then the President of the Security Council, organized a similar public debate (see S/PV.5129) to launch the negotiations that resulted in the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005). For today's debate, I welcome the important contributions of the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bernard Kouchner; the Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium, Mr. Charles Michel; and the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Mr. Vittorio Craxi. Their presence lent additional stature to this meeting of the Security Council devoted to children.

I would also like to express the Beninese Government's great appreciation to the Secretary-General and to his Special Representative, Under-Secretary-General Radhika Coomaraswamy, for the impressive annual report submitted on children and armed conflict (S/2007/757). The report is as exhaustive as it is informative about the scale of violations of which children are victim, caught as they are in a vicious spiral of armed conflict in countries throughout the world.

We have also been able to appreciate, through the facts and analysis set out in the report, the praiseworthy efforts of the United Nations system, in particular by UNICEF, represented here today by its Executive Director, Ms. Ann Veneman, to tackle resolutely the violations of the rights of children in conflict situations and to increase pressure on their perpetrators in order to force them to halt these violations.

We welcome in particular the effective, methodical and persevering consideration of the issue by the Security Council Working Group set up within the context of resolution 1612 (2005). It provides the Security Council with determined leadership and it confirms the relevance of the reasons that led to its establishment.

We also welcome the mobilization of civil society, which makes it possible to strengthen monitoring of the activities of national armed forces and of non-State armed groups and of their practices towards children in conflict situations. We have also noted the ongoing mobilization of the special task forces on monitoring and reporting, which strive to keep the spotlight on violations of children's rights in countries in conflict situations.

My delegation gathers from this report that the Security Council has not yet fully reflected in its actions the need to pay equal attention to the issue of children and armed conflict, regardless of whether the countries concerned are on its agenda. That is the only explanation that my delegation can find for the fact that the Working Group and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General lack sufficient resources to follow up on situations in countries not on the Council's agenda.

In that regard, the seriousness of the facts brought out in the report requires not only that appropriate budgetary measures be taken to put an end to a situation that penalizes children in countries not on the agenda, but also that the Security Council's Working Group be fully mandated so that it can fully carry out its functions related to information received from the monitoring and reporting mechanism concerning children and armed conflict.

Our second observation after considering this report is that the Security Council has not demonstrated all the firmness necessary to make inveterate violators of children's rights in countries in armed conflict situations comply with international norms. In that regard, my delegation is of the view that effective measures must be taken against parties that do not meet their obligations under resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), particularly with regard to the adoption of action plans to cease violations of children's rights in all their aspects.

The international justice system, in particular the International Criminal Court, must also become more active than it has been in the past, by pursuing those who are responsible for the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts or who commit reprehensible acts against them, in contravention of international law and international humanitarian law. Here, I must welcome the cooperation that has made it possible to transfer to The Hague those warlords from the Democratic Republic of the Congo sought by the Court. In that regard, my delegation — which, since 2005, has raised the issue of raising the level of qualifications for the recruitment and use of child soldiers — is pleased to note that one of the persons transferred is also accused of crimes against humanity, not only of war crimes. Unquestionably, the maltreatment of child soldiers dehumanizes them, making them war machines or simply what we might call cheap cannon fodder. That is very sad and is nothing less than a crime against humanity. Those responsible must be held accountable to the international community.

Our third observation is that the Security Council's actions have been aimed much more at demobilizing children involved in armed groups. The fundamental issue of their rehabilitation and reintegration into their communities does not seem to have received the attention required. That situation could be a cause of the resurgence of conflicts in the countries concerned. The international community must find the means to ensure appropriate supervision of children freed by armed groups.

The international community must redouble its efforts to put an end to the use of rape as a weapon of war. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the adoption of resolution 62/134, on eliminating rape and other forms of sexual violence in all their manifestations, including in conflict and related situations, adopted by the General Assembly in December 2007.

Our fourth observation is that the United Nations must redouble its efforts to halt once and for all, at the level of its personnel, the ignominy of the sexual exploitation of children in the context of peacekeeping operations. The troop-contributing countries must fully shoulder their responsibility by taking the measures required to ensure the prevention of sexual crimes, which must be vigorously prosecuted. At the same time, international and governmental forces must ensure strict respect for their rules of engagement in order to avoid the abuses that have claimed countless victims among the children and civilian populations whom they are supposed to protect.

Finally, my delegation fully associates itself with the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report and pleads for their diligent implementation for the great benefit of children, on whom depends the future of countries in conflict situations, which must return as soon as possible to the path of peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Bailly (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February.

The Ivorian delegation — which I have the honour to lead in the absence of His Excellency Mr. Ilahiri Djédjé, Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations, who is on mission in the context of the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement — is pleased to make its modest contribution to today's open debate on children and armed conflict.

Instability and internal conflicts lead to uncontrolled population movements. Children, that important sector of the vulnerable population in our countries, must thus fend for themselves, sometimes without parents and teachers, and thus without education and health care. Hence, we have witnessed the phenomenon of child soldiers, whether as a result of their own will, for the simple reason of survival, or as a result of recruitment. With regard to the latter case, the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757) states that the recruitment of children and internal displacement are closely linked.

Here, I should like, on behalf of my delegation and on my own account, to congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his reading of the Ivorian crisis. I should also like to welcome the positive approach of the Security Council and the cooperation that it has shown in formulating resolutions on Côte d'Ivoire — particularly the most recent resolution, 1795 (2008), to mention just one.

It should also be noted that, in countries beset by armed conflict, many children and young people suffer not only from war-related violence, but also from the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS. That is why my delegation commends UNICEF's actions throughout the country. Congratulations go also to United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Health Organization for all their activities on the ground to make their contributions in the area of children's protection.

A country such as ours, which makes peace its second religion, nearly toppled in the horror of an endless war. Very fortunately, the Ivorian parties understood the trap of armed conflict and made a firm commitment to end that situation in order to devote themselves to the real battle — combating poverty and underdevelopment — by becoming involved in the process of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Faced with the deteriorating situation of the past five years, His Excellency Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, the Ivorian head of State, took the welcome initiative of engaging in direct dialogue with the former rebels, which led to the Ouagadougou Agreement, which was endorsed by the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and the Security Council. Thanks to the implementation of the Agreement and of the recommendations of the Security Council, everyone in Côte d'Ivoire is pleased to see that no Ivorian parties are now listed in the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General. No substantiated evidence of the active recruitment or use of children by armed groups has been found.

My Government has thus been recognized for all its actions to protect children, and it intends, more than ever before, to redouble its efforts in this sphere — members of the Council may be certain of that. Here, my delegation considers that, as the Secretary-General suggests in his report, task forces on monitoring and reporting should continue their work, supported by a verification commission, in order to ensure that this trend continues.

On Tuesday, 5 February 2008, my delegation took note with interest of the draft conclusions adopted by the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. These clearly reflect the qualitative developments in the political situation in Côte d'Ivoire. We welcome the close cooperation in which we were involved, and we encourage the Working Group to continue its noble mission on situations around the world that continue to be matters of concern.

My delegation is also pleased that, following the visit to our country by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Côte d'Ivoire is no longer numbered among the countries in which child soldiers are to be found. Ms. Coomaraswamy deserves my delegation's praise for her appropriate and convincing working methods.

The Ivorian Government is aware that the future of the nation depends on the quality of its young people and has taken a number of concrete measures, including the following. In November 2005, the National Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire formulated an action plan to put an end to the phenomenon of the child soldiers who had fought at their side. Today, the integration of young people falls within the "reintegration" element of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme being implemented under the Ouagadougou Agreement. The national DDR programme, which is being supervised by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF, provides for a reintegration plan adapted to the needs of young victims of our country's armed conflict. The Civic Service envisioned in the Ouagadougou Agreement will welcome all young people who have become familiar with the handling of weapons in war. In August 2007, the President of the Republic signed a decree on the organization and functioning of the Civic Service.

For those reasons, my delegation wishes again to request the international community to help Côte d'Ivoire to combat impunity throughout our territory. We are aware that the Ivorian judicial administration has not covered the whole of our national territory since the beginning of the crisis, on 19 September 2002. We all consider that since the courts, the police and the gendarmerie have not been redeployed in areas formerly occupied by the Forces Nouvelles, it would not be appropriate to speak of impunity or law and order. Likewise, the Ivorian Government still expects an exemption from the United Nations regarding the non-lethal weapons that are essential for equipping our law enforcement agencies.

Côte d'Ivoire is eager for peace and respects human rights in general and the rights of the child in particular. With the on-the-ground experience we have gained in five years of crisis management, our country is at the disposal of the international community to share that extraordinary experience, especially with countries still in situations of armed conflict.

The Ivorian parties — led by His Excellency President Laurent Gbagbo and Prime Minister Guillaume Soro, and under the watchful eye of His Excellency President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso, to whom we express our gratitude — are striving to bring the country out of crisis, through the organization of credible, transparent elections. This is in the interest not only of our country, but also of the entire West Africa sub-region. To that end, the Ivorian Government looks to the United Nations for greater political, material and financial support to help it redeploy the general administration and the judicial administration, including the police and the gendarmerie, in the areas formerly occupied by the Forces Nouvelles.

In conclusion, my delegation urgently appeals to the United Nations, and in particular to the Security Council, to put a permanent end to the phenomenon of child soldiers, which poses a threat to international peace and security, either through prevention or by effectively addressing crises that arise anywhere in the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Akindele (Nigeria): The delegation of Nigeria congratulates you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council, confident that your sterling qualities will stand you in very good stead as you steer the Council in its onerous tasks and bring about a fruitful outcome during the month of February.

We would like also to express our most sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for his very comprehensive and detailed report on the situation of children affected by armed conflict (S/2007/757), including the content and the tenor of its annexes I and II. We also applaud the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Executive Director of UNICEF, as well as that of all agencies involved in this sphere of activity.

My delegation notes the key elements of the report, relating, inter alia, to the fact that some progress has been made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism; the development and implementation of action plans; the mainstreaming of the protection of children in United Nations peacekeeping operations; compliance with regard to ending the recruitment and exploitation of children; rape and other sexual violence; abductions; denial of humanitarian assistance and access to children; and absence of respect for the rule of law by some parties to armed conflict.

My delegation is indeed delighted to note that some modicum of progress and some positive developments have been recorded during the reporting period, in that, in some instances, no new cases of recruitment of children have occurred, and in that some measures have been taken to effect the release of children from the grip of certain armed forces for rehabilitation. Other positive measures include disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for children, as well as investigations into cases of abuse of the rights of children.

Nevertheless, we observe that there is a lot of work still to be done, as violations of the rights of children caught up in situations of armed conflict and violations of humanitarian law have not abated. In this connection, my delegation is of the view that it behoves the international community not to rest on its oars, but rather to rededicate itself to a greater commitment to ending impunity for those who abuse the rights of children. Indeed, is it not high time that the international community tackled the question of the abuse of the rights of children from the viewpoint of prevention, rather than tackling its effects? A well articulated conflict prevention mechanism or framework would not only spare the international community the tedium of being called upon, time and again, to attend to festering conflicts — which continue to occur in situations of poverty, marginalization, political and economic exclusion, impunity, lawlessness, injustice, et cetera — but could indeed pave the way to finding a lasting solution to conflict.

My delegation therefore believes that effective dialogue, poverty alleviation measures, technical assistance, political and economic inclusion and measures to tackle the root causes of conflict should go pari passu with the relevant recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report.

With regard to conflict management, we urge that good attention be paid to the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons, which tend to fuel conflicts, especially in developing countries. The case of West Africa is a case in point, and that is why the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) found it expedient to sign the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons on 14 June 2004, in Abuja.

My delegation wholeheartedly endorses the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the role of the International Criminal Court with regard to violations of the rights of children that fall within its purview and jurisdiction.

Nigeria considers the promotion and protection of the rights of children as a top priority and has indeed made remarkable progress in the domestication of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Indeed, as of today, no fewer than 17 states of the Federation have adopted the Nigerian Child Rights Act, which came into force in 2003. Nigeria's commitment is unshakeable with regard to the full implementation of all the legal instruments relating to the rights of the child. This, of course, includes the recent declaration of the General Assembly's Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow-up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children (General Assembly resolution 62/88).

Finally, in order to further strengthen the modest but notable achievements made in protection of children, particularly those in armed conflict, and to move towards the goal of ending impunity and bringing violators of children's rights to justice, we urge States that are yet to do so to ratify and implement the various conventions and protocols that guarantee the safety, protection, promotion and continued espousal of the rights of children in all situations, particularly in armed conflict.

In the same vein, we urge all the relevant agencies and stakeholders to pay the necessary attention to rehabilitation, technical assistance, capacity-building, reintegration programmes and other post-conflict challenges, with the goal of ensuring proper development of children in peace, love and progress, away from the destructive situations of conflict. We believe that the world will be a better place by paying serious and committed attention to this clarion call.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor next to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda) (*spoke in French*): My delegation congratulates you, Mr. President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. We thank you for having scheduled this debate on children and armed conflict. My delegation also welcomes the participation of individuals who travelled to this meeting, that is, His Excellency Mr. Samuel Lewis-Navarro, Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Panama; His Excellency Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of France; His Excellency Mr. Charles Michel, Minister for Development Cooperation of Belgium; and His Excellency Mr. Vittorio Craxi, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report (S/2007/757). We also thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict, for her presentation. We thank Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, and Ms. Jo Becker, Representative of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, for their respective statements, which are very useful for a good understanding of the subject.

Rwanda is profoundly concerned with the well-being of children — not just in Rwanda, but also in the region of the Great Lakes and in the world in general. Thus we welcome the progress achieved, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General. We are also profoundly concerned to note the still-considerable scale of the scourge of the use of children in armed conflicts and of rape and other sexual violence against children and women in conflict areas. My delegation thanks the

United Nations and other actors for the progress achieved and welcomes the recommendations made.

When my delegation speaks of children in armed conflict and of rape and sexual violence committed against children and women in conflict areas, we speak from experience, having suffered that scourge during the 1994 genocide. After the halt of the genocide, my Government made demobilization of child soldiers and combating rape and sexual violence major objectives of its policy. We welcome the results achieved, which mean that not only are there no more child soldiers in Rwanda and that combating rape and sexual violence has greatly reduced the scale of that scourge, but also that a vigorous policy for the protection and advancement of women is in force and that laws to severely punish those who violate these rights and to promote the rights of children and women have been adopted.

With regard to the recruitment of children by armed forces in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the rape and sexual violence committed there, my delegation deeply deplores the situation and is doing everything in its power to contribute to its resolution. However, my delegation would like to draw the attention of the Security Council to the fact that the real solution lies in the resolution of the problem, which is the root of this evil: disarmament and repatriation of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and the ex-FAR and Interahamwe, who, after having committed genocide in Rwanda in 1994, continued their murderous work in the Kivus. The threatened population found refuge in Rwanda 10 years ago, and the genocidal forces continue to occupy the land whose owners languish in refugee camps in Rwanda and bordering countries. Those genocidal forces make massive use of child soldiers and rape young Congolese girls and women. That was clearly set out in the report of Under-Secretary-General John Holmes. Those forces continue to threaten Rwanda, where they still desire to finish their dirty task of genocide.

My delegation finds that the most appropriate way to free children and women in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo from the scourges described in the Secretary-General's report is through the liberation of the region from the genocidal forces who have chosen to take up residence there and who live openly, under the nose of the Security Council and of the broader international community. It is essential that the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in cooperation with the countries concerned, make that a priority. Thus it would serve the cause of children and respond to the expectations of the Nairobi communiqué and to the conclusions of the Goma Conference of January 2008.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

> "The Security Council takes note with appreciation of the seventh report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757) on children and armed conflict, and the positive developments, as well as outstanding challenges, in the implementation of its resolution 1612 (2005) reflected therein.
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> "The Security Council, reiterating its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, reaffirms its commitment to address the widespread impact of armed conflict on children, its determination to ensure respect for and the implementation of its resolution 1612 (2005), and all of its previous resolutions on children and armed conflict, as well as respect for other international norms and standards for the protection of children affected by armed conflicts.
>
> "The Security Council stresses, in this regard, the need to adopt a broad strategy of conflict prevention, which addresses the root causes of armed conflict in a comprehensive manner in order to enhance the protection of children on a long-term basis, including by promoting sustainable development, poverty eradication, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law and respect for and protection of human rights.
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> "The Security Council reiterates the primary responsibility of national Governments in providing effective protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflicts, and encourages further cooperation and coordination between Member States, the United Nations system and the international community, in a spirit of partnership.
>
> "The Security Council reiterates the importance of the full, safe and unhindered

access of humanitarian personnel and goods and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all children affected by armed conflict, and stresses the importance for all, within the framework of humanitarian assistance, of upholding and respecting the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

"The Security Council calls for the full implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, as called for in paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in all situations of armed conflict listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report S/2007/757.

"In this regard, the Security Council reiterates that the mechanism should continue to collect and provide timely, objective, accurate and reliable information on violations and abuses committed against children affected by armed conflict and to operate with the participation of and in cooperation with national Governments and relevant United Nations and civil society actors, including at the country level.

"The Security Council commends the work carried out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, including her field activities in situations of armed conflicts.

"The Security Council also commends the work carried out by UNICEF and the child protection advisers of peacekeeping operations and political missions, in cooperation with other relevant United Nations entities.

"The Security Council welcomes the sustained activity of its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as outlined, inter alia, in the latest report by its Chair (S/2007/428), and invites it to continue adopting conclusions and proposing effective recommendations for consideration and, where appropriate, implementation by the Council, including through mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions.

"The Security Council will continue to consider including or enhancing the presence of child protection advisers in the mandates of all relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions.

"The Security Council strongly emphasizes the need to end impunity for violations and abuses perpetrated against children in armed conflict, and in this regard welcomes the fact that several individuals who are alleged to have committed such crimes have been brought to justice by national, international and 'mixed' criminal courts and tribunals.

"The Security Council acknowledges that the implementation of its resolution 1612 (2005) has already generated progress, resulting in the release and reintegration of children in their families and communities, and in a more systematic dialogue between the United Nations country task forces and parties to the armed conflict on the implementation of time-bound action plans.

"Nonetheless, the Security Council strongly condemns the continuing recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law, killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, denial of humanitarian access to children and attacks against schools and hospitals by parties to armed conflict.

"The Security Council is concerned with the widespread and systematic use of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, in particular girls, in situations of armed conflict, and calls on all parties to armed conflicts to take special measures to protect girls and boys from sexual and gender-based violence, particularly rape, in situations of armed conflict.

"The Security Council expresses its concern that civilians, particularly children, continue to account for the vast majority of victims of acts of violence committed by parties to armed conflicts, including killing and maiming as a result of deliberate targeting, indiscriminate and excessive use of force in violation of applicable international law. The Council condemns these acts and demands that those parties immediately put an end to such practices.

"The Security Council is gravely concerned by the persistent disregard of its resolutions on children and armed conflict by parties to armed conflict identified in the reports of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, including parties to whom precise, immediate and unequivocal requests have been addressed. Recalling the statement S/PRST/2006/48 made by its President on 28 November 2006, the Security Council reaffirms its intention to make use of all the tools provided in its resolution 1612 (2005).

"The Security Council reiterates its call on parties to armed conflict listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report S/2007/757 that have not already done so to prepare and implement, without further delay, concrete time-bound action plans to halt recruitment and use of children in violation of applicable international law, and to address all violations and abuses against children in close cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as with UNICEF and the United Nations country task forces on monitoring and reporting.

"The Security Council expresses concern over the casualties inflicted on children in armed conflict by the indiscriminate use of landmines and cluster munitions, and in this regard calls upon all parties to armed conflicts to desist from such practice.

"In order to further strengthen the comprehensive framework of the protection of children in armed conflict, considering the changing nature of armed conflicts and the issues raised by the Secretary-General in his report, the Security Council expresses its readiness to review the relevant provisions of its resolutions on children and armed conflict, building on the provisions of resolution 1612 (2005), with a view to further increasing the efficiency of its actions.

"The Security Council recognizes that a stronger focus is required on the reintegration and rehabilitation of children associated with armed forces and armed groups, and in this regard invites all parties concerned, including Member States, regional organizations, the Secretariat and other relevant United Nations entities, including UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the international financial institutions, including the World Bank, as well as civil society, to enhance their exchange of information about programmes and best practices, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of international law, Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict, as well as the Paris Principles to protect children from unlawful recruitment by armed forces or groups, and ensure that adequate resources and funding are available to support national strategies or action plans in the area of child protection and welfare, and community-based programmes, with a view to ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of their programmatic response to the release, rehabilitation and reintegration of all children associated with armed forces and armed groups.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to submit his next report by May 2009 on the implementation of its resolutions on children and armed conflict."

This statement will be published as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2008/6.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the current stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Before adjourning the meeting, allow me to express my gratitude once again for the difficult and relevant work carried out on the issue of children and armed conflict by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and the non-governmental organizations. I also wish to thank France for its leadership in this area and all Member States that have participated in this important debate. In conclusion, I thank the support staff for this meeting for their patience and dedication.

The meeting rose at 8.15 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.5835

Security Council

Distr.: General
14 February 2008

Original: English

Official communiqué of the 5835th (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 14 February 2008, at 3 p.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

> "At its 5835th meeting, held in private on 14 February 2008, the Security Council considered the item entitled 'Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)'.
>
> "The President, with the consent of the Council, invited the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.
>
> "Members of the Council and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia had an exchange of views."

United Nations S/PV.5836

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5836th meeting

Friday, 15 February 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Arias	(Panama)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Belle
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mukongo Ngay (Democratic Republic of the Congo) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2008/97, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Belgium, Burkina Faso, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Indonesia, Italy, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Panama, Russian Federation, South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1799 (2008).

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.